

University of Montana

ScholarWorks at University of Montana

Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, &
Professional Papers

Graduate School

1992

Study of a production team in north China in 1969 and 1970

Xiaoming Wei

The University of Montana

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd>

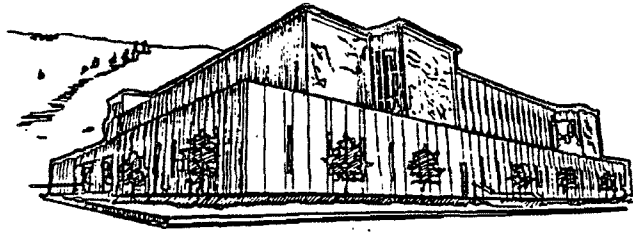
Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Wei, Xiaoming, "Study of a production team in north China in 1969 and 1970" (1992). *Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers*. 5265.

<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd/5265>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.



Maureen and Mike
MANSFIELD LIBRARY

Copying allowed as provided under provisions
of the Fair Use Section of the U.S.
COPYRIGHT LAW, 1976.

Any copying for commercial purposes
or financial gain may be undertaken only
with the author's written consent.

University of
Montana

A STUDY OF A PRODUCTION TEAM IN NORTH CHINA
IN 1969 AND 1970

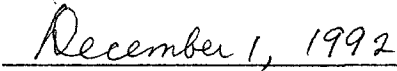
By
Xiaoming Wei

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree of
Master
of
Interdisciplinary Studies
(Anthropology and History)
in The University of Montana
1992

Approved by


Chairman, Academic Committee


Dean, Graduate School


Date

UMI Number: EP40729

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI EP40729

Published by ProQuest LLC (2014). Copyright in the Dissertation held by the Author.

Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code

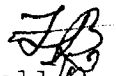




ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

12-14-92

Wei, Xiaoming, MA, November 1992 Interdisciplinary Studies
(Anthropology and History)

A Study of a Production Team in North China in 1969 and 1970
(113 pp.)

Director: Frank B. Bessac 
Director: Gregory R. Campbell 
Director: Linda S. Frey 

My studies focus on the structure of a production unit within the commune system in China. The commune system dominated the lives of 700 million farmers for twenty-two years. Under the commune system the production team was the basic social and economic unit on which a farmer depended for 95% of his livelihood. I have tried to give a detailed description of major aspects of team organization, such as the salary system, the method of distribution, the division of labor, the use of private plot and so forth. I have also discussed the problems related to the team, such as the functions of the commune and brigade, and the team's role in national affairs. The classes, taxes, welfare, and sideline economy have also been touched upon. I particularly point out that the distribution system was not totally rational and resulted in a major baby boom.

The commune system is no longer in existence. My understanding of rural life mainly derived from my two years of experience in a rural village on the North China Plain in 1969 and 1970. In my last ten months there I was assigned the job of cash accountant and workpoint recorder. It offered me an opportunity to observe the system from the inside. It also made me understand some Party policies which are not found in official documents. My status allowed me to merge into the society. After I left the village, I continued to be concerned with rural affairs. In particular, I paid more attention to CPC'S policies. My relatives offered me another source of information, including my grandfather and three uncles who lived throughout the whole commune period on a village in Shaanxi Province. I have also relied on some published materials in English which I have found in this country. I have had little access to published Chinese materials.

The commune system derived from Stalin and Mao's interpretation of the communist ideology as applied to the rural area. Its defects were obvious even in its more well integrated period. Farmers were deprived of any freedom of choice in their economic affairs. It became one of the most sluggish economic systems in the modern world. The population increase resulting in large part from the distribution system is the biggest problem the nation of China is facing today.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis was made possible by the generous aid of many people. I am grateful that I could always get help when I needed it at the University of Montana.

I owe my greatest debt of gratitude to my three advisors: **Frank B. Bessac**, Emeritus professor of Anthropology and the Chairman of my Academic Committee, **Gregory R. Campbell**, professor in the Department of Anthropology, and **Linda S. Frey**, professor in the Department of History. Their academic advice and personal support made my work more scholarly and readable. They also undertook tedious administrative work as my Academic Committee members.

My special thanks are also due people beyond the Committee members. **Susanne L. Bessac**, Faculty Affiliate in the Department of Anthropology, answered questions for me whenever I needed and read my draft several times. We often sat together to discuss my studies and thesis. **Ward H. Powell**, Emeritus professor of Foreign Languages and Literatures and my volunteer English tutor, read my paper carefully. **John B. Wang**, Emeritus professor of Foreign Languages and Literatures, supported my stay in this country. Their personal aid was generously given throughout my four and half years of studies.

I also owe debt to **Van J. Symons**, the visiting Mansfield professor in 1991, who helped me find pertinent materials in this country.

Back in my country, I appreciate the help from **Luo Baoshan**, a research fellow in Guangzhou Academy of Social Sciences, and his wife, **Liu Lusheng**, a research fellow in Guangdong Academy of Social Sciences. They searched for and mailed me Chinese materials I had asked for without delay.

Without the confidence and openness expressed toward me by the villagers of Nanwu, who are subjects of my study, this study would not have been possible.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to the State of Montana for granting me fee waivers while pursuing my studies at the University of Montana, Missoula.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
INTRODUCTION	1
Chapter	
1. PEOPLE'S COMMUNE: THE LAST STAGE OF COLLECTIVIZATION	5
2. CHANGES IN PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES	11
3. ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTION OF THE COMMUNE	15
4. ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTION OF THE PRODUCTION BRIGADE	21
5. PRODUCTION TEAM	26
PROPERTY	26
PRIVATE PLOT	29
WORKPOINTS	30
DECISION-MAKING	34
DIVISION OF LABOR	37
DISTRIBUTION	41
6. COMMUNE'S ROLE IN THE PLANNED ECONOMY	47
7. COMMUNE'S ROLE IN EGALITARIANISM	51
8. TEAM'S ROLE IN LARGE SCALE PROJECTS	55
9. CLASSES	58
10. TAXES	64
11. SIDELINE ECONOMY	67
12. WELFARE	71

Chapter	Page
13. POLITICAL INDOCTRINATION	76
14. SOME CHANGES IN SOCIAL BEHAVIOR	82
15. ELEVATION OF WOMEN'S STATUS	86
16. FARMERS' OPINIONS ON THE COMMUNE SYSTEM	90
17. PROBLEMS CAUSED BY THE COMMUNE SYSTEM	95
CONCLUSION	100
APPENDIX	
A. Map of the Neighborhood of the Third Production Team of Nanwu Brigade (1969)	106
B. Glossary	107
BIBLIOGRAPHY	109

INTRODUCTION

China has the largest population in the world and of its people 80% are farmers living in the countryside. From 1958 to 1979 all the farmers were organized into the commune system without any exceptions. During the Cultural Revolution millions of middle school students were sent down to the countryside under Mao Zedong's instruction. I was one of them. I was sent to a village named Nanwu and lived there for two years, from January 1969 to December 1970, as an "Intellectual Youth". In the last ten months I was the cash accountant and the workpoint recorder in the Third Production Team. This experience, as well as my family's connections with the countryside, helped me to understand farmers' lives. This article is largely based on my own experiences as well as on some written materials I found in the United States.

The Nanwu Village or Nanwu Brigade, as people called it then, was one of about fifteen brigades in the Jiuzhou Commune. It was located two and a half kilometers north of the Commune seat, Jiuzhou Village. From Jiuzhou, there was a tar-paved road of 12 kilometers eastward to the county town, Langfang. Langfang was midway between Beijing, the capital

and second largest city, and Tianjin, the third largest city in China. These two cities were only 138 kilometers apart. Geographically, this area lies in the northern corner of the Great North China Plain and it is one of the most densely populated areas in China. The distance from village to village seldom exceeds 3 kilometers and the village size ranges from 500 to 2,500 people. A railway linked Langfang with Beijing and Tianjin. The Beijing-Tianjin Highway did not pass through Langfang. The nearest distance from Langfang to the Beijing-Tianjin Highway was about 30 kilometers. Standing on a roof in Nanwu village on a clear night, one could see a pale glow on the northern in the direction of Beijing.

Despite Nanwu's location, it was isolated from the influences of city life. The appearance of a stranger would attract all people's attention. Village people had a number of local expressions--mostly nouns, adverbs and adjectives--that I had never heard before in my hometown of Tianjin. If you had not worked on farms, you would be unable to understand these expressions. It took me half a year to master the local speech.

Nanwu used to be three villages--East Nanwu, West Nanwu and Shan Village in the middle. Because of the increased population, West Nanwu and Shan Village had joined together (see the map in Appendix A). In 1969, Nanwu contained five production teams with about 1,400 residents. The Third

Production Team had about 40 households and 278 people, including me and another intellectual youth. It was larger than the national average. The team members were the residents in the original Shan Village and about a dozen families in the original West Nanwu (see the map in Appendix A). Most team members belonged to three clans--Shan, Zhao and Sun. Three families--Zhang, Li, and Qiu--were called "move-in outsiders." Their families had been here no more than three generations. The Shan clan settled down first, so this place was called Shan Village. However, nobody knew when this place was first inhabited. All villagers had generation status. The generation of the "move-in outsiders" linked with that of native clans. People were identified by their generation status and married status. They called each other "third granduncle," "fifth sister-in-law" and so forth. I had no generation status there, so I felt embarrassed when I addressed people who were older than I. To call older people by name is impolite in China.

In 1969 and 1970, the commune system was in its most consolidated form. The situation was quite different from that in the mid 1970s. In the late 1960s, China was an entirely closed country. Only very few foreigners identified as "friendly" were allowed to visit model communes and their brigades. These models were Dazhai Brigade in Shanxi Province; Malu Commune in Shanghai suburbs; Evergreen Commune and China-Korea Friendship Commune in Beijing

suburbs. All the others were forbidden to foreigners. Except Dazhai, the models above were urbanized communes. They were very different from most others in many ways. Economically, a person's daily income in these urbanized communes could be five times as high as city workers. Meanwhile, in most rural communes, a person's daily income was only one-fifth to one-third of a city worker's. The economic condition in Nanwu was about the national average or a little bit higher.

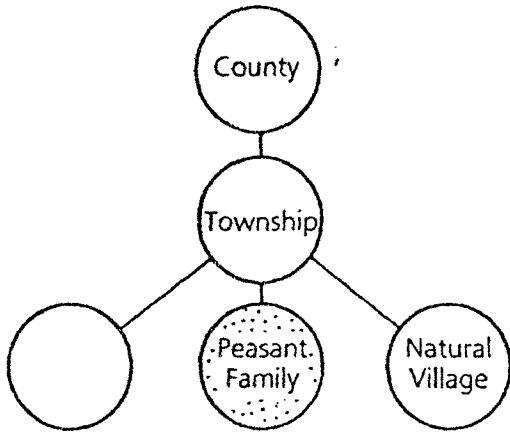
This thesis focuses on the production team, because the production team was the basic social and political unit in the countryside. The farmers' material life was tied more closely to the production team than to the brigade and commune. I will try to answer the following questions: How were three-level farming units under the commune system organized? What were their main functions? How were production and distribution conducted? How did the state control farmers' lives through the commune? What role did the team play in national affairs? What changes did the commune system bring in social structure and social behavior? What were the changes in women's status? How did farmers view collective farming? What problems did it cause? The aspects of classes, taxes, welfare, and sideline economy will also be touched upon.

Chapter 1

PEOPLE'S COMMUNE: THE LAST STAGE OF COLLECTIVIZATION

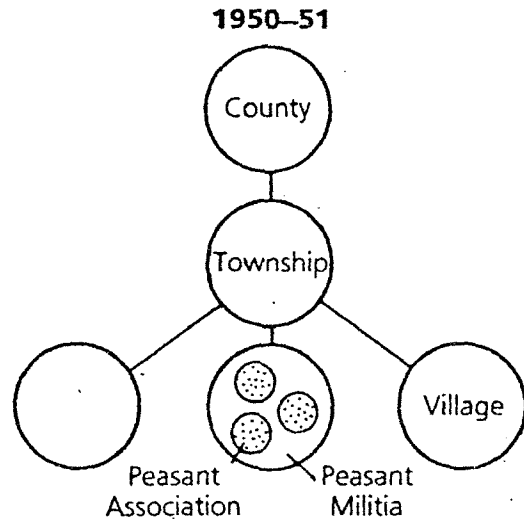
The establishment of the commune system was the result of a series of collectivization movements initiated by Mao Zedong. Since the Communists took over in 1949, rural political organizations had experienced a series of changes. At first, the Land Reform was carried out from 1949 to 1951, and through it every farmer was given an equal amount of land. From 1952 to 1954 the Mutual-Aid Team (MAT) was encouraged; then the Lower Agricultural Producers' Cooperative (LAPC) was formed in 1955 and 1956, and the Higher Agricultural Producers' Cooperative (HAPC) in 1957; and, at last, in 1958 the People's commune was formed. All these changes took place in the form of political organizations. The physical appearance of rural villages did not change much. Farmers were still using the same kind of farm tools which their ancestors had used before. The following figures, by Alan P. L. Liu, show these political changes in the rural structure from the year 1949 to 1983.¹

**Chinese Countryside
before
Collectivization
1949-50**



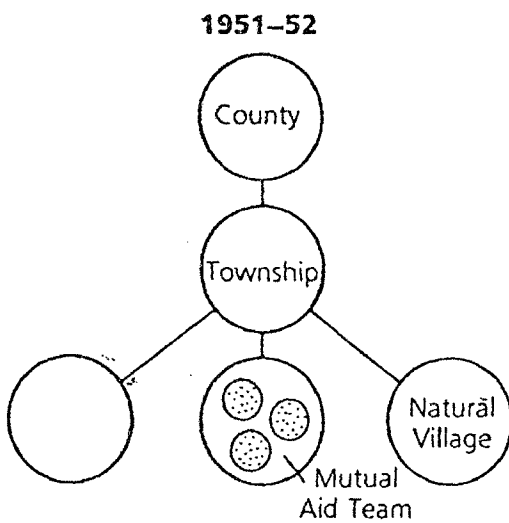
1

**Land Reform
1950-51**



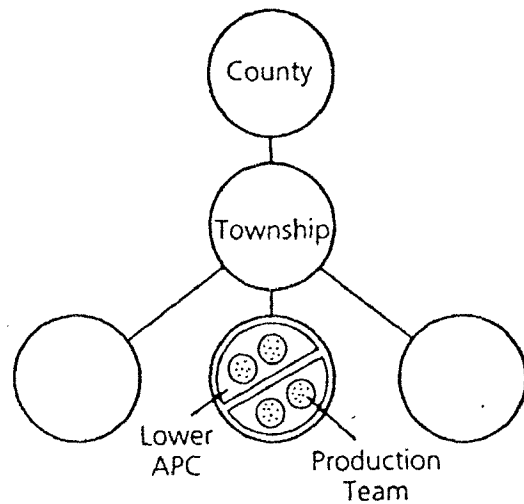
2

**Mutual Aid Team
1951-52**



3

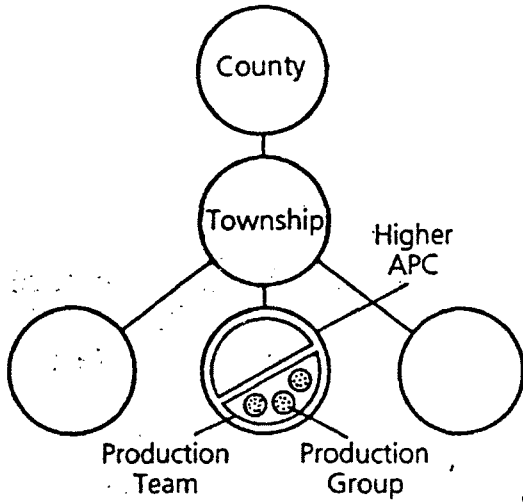
**Lower Agricultural
Producers' Cooperatives
(APCs)
1953-55**



4

Higher APCs

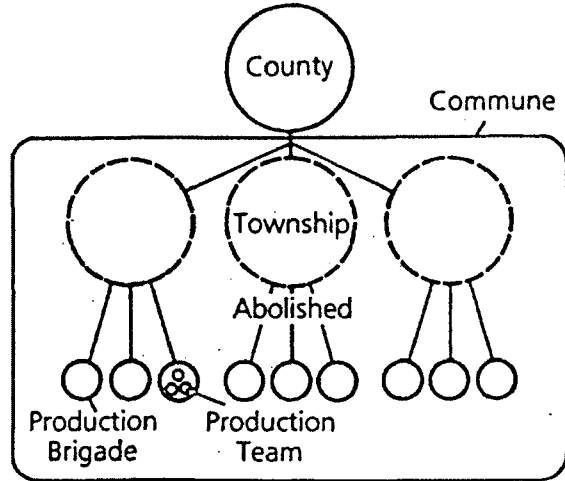
1956



5

People's Commune

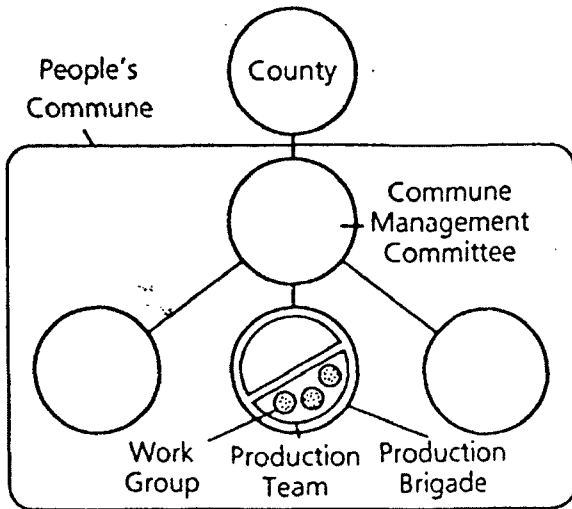
August 1958



6

People's Commune

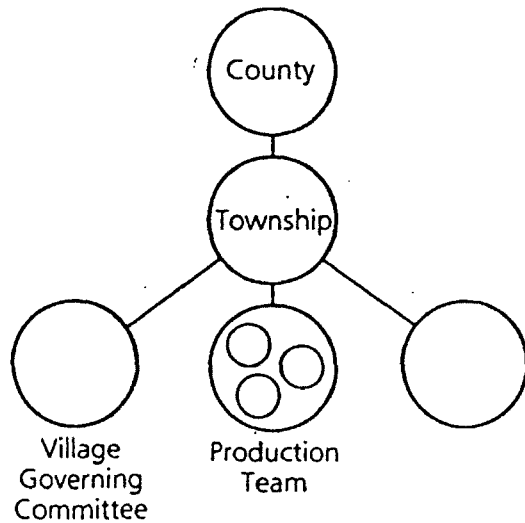
1963-82



7

Township Government Restored

1983



8

Not all the farmers experienced all these stages. The collectivization drive was conducted differently from place to place. In some places the Mutual Aid Teams were not organized and in the areas the MAT organized, not all the farmers joined in. In Hebei Province from 1951 to 1954, no more than 10% of the farmers were in cooperatives (the MAT) each year. In 1955, the figure increased to 34.9%. The rest were individual farmers.² The movements of the LAPC and the HAPC were initiated so quickly that in many places the two stages merged into one. According to the statistics cited by Edward Friedman, in Hebei Province in 1955, there were only cooperatives (the MAT). No farmers were in collectives (the LAPC and the HAPC). However, in 1956, 99.4% of farmers were in collectives, and there were no cooperatives any longer.³ The Nanwu villagers could not tell the difference between the LAPC and HAPC. The commune represented the last stage of the collectivization. The whole collective drive was said to be "encouraged" by the local leaders, but in fact it was forced or semi-forced by the Communist Party. The Land Reform and the Commune Drive were completely forced, and the MAT, LAPC and HAPC were semi-forced. One story which occurred in Nanwu offers an example of how the collective drive was conducted. During the LAPC or HAPC, Zhao Guangxue and several other middle peasants had a chance to get together and talk about the collectivization. Zhao teased and said: "We are so poor, so let us organize a "Guangdan

Committee (pauper committee)." "*Guangdan*" is a funny word for poor people in Chinese, while the word "committee" sounds sacred. This is a witty combination of two Chinese words. When this joke spread, Zhao Guangxue and other few middle peasants were arrested. Though they were released quickly, nobody dared to make jokes about the collectivization again.

The term "*gongshe*" (commune) was first used to translate the concept of the "Paris Commune." Mao adopted this term to describe the rural reorganization. Qiliying was a district in Xinxiang Prefecture, Henan Province. In mid 1958, 56 HAPCs were organized. The Communist Party Committee of Qiliying District decided to join these 56 HAPCs into a *renmindashe* (People's big unit). This was a new social organization. Many people suggested a name for it. At last *gongshe* was adopted. On August 4, 1958, Qiliying People's Commune was born. Two days later, on August 6, Mao came there for a visit because of a central government official's suggestion. When Mao saw the sign of "Qiliying People's Commune," he said: "The name of People's Commune is good." During his visit, he said: "Good People's Commune" several times.⁴ "Good People's Commune" appeared in newspapers afterwards. When Mao read it, he said: "Bad, bad, this has not been discussed yet in the Politburo." In the enlarged Politburo meeting at Beidaihe afterwards, the form of People's Commune was endorsed after the fact.⁵

According to official statistics, "as of 1963, there were in Communist China a total of 74,000 communes, divided into 700,000 brigades and 5 million teams."⁶ The figures had not changed much since then. By 1975 there were "52,000 people's communes, averaging about 26,000 households each; 700,000 production brigades, each comprising an average of about 190-195 households; and 5,150,000 production teams, of about 25-30 households each."⁷ In my area, each commune covered about 20 square kilometers. The commune administration was seated in the biggest village of the area. Around it were about fifteen villages. Each village was one brigade which contained 1 to 7 teams. It was the so-called "three-level collective ownership."

The commune was a great social experiment, because around 15% of the world's population was involved in it. It also marked the change in the national economic system. Before 1958, the year of the "Great Leap Forward," and after 1978, the first year of the "Open Door" policy, there existed an individual economic ownership both in the rural areas and in the cities. But during the years of 1958 to 1978, only two types of economic ownership existed. In cities the so-called "state ownership" controlled over 90% of the economy, with the remaining part controlled by "collective ownership" economy. Meanwhile, the so-called "collective ownership" dominated the rural economy under which about 5% of land remained private plots.

Chapter 2

CHANGES IN PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

The commune, as we saw above, was an artificial unit. It was the result of a series of movements mobilized by Mao Zedong. In the first year, the communist principle of "each does his best; to each according to his need" was the ideal. The practice of this principle and the rapid establishment of the commune system caused great chaos in the countryside. The commune was organized almost in one night. Suddenly, all crops and property were shifted from a small group to a large commune. Nobody was urged to harvest crops, but encouraged to refine steel or do other projects. Most of the crops were rotting in fields. Mess halls were set up in each village and all the people had to eat in them. Family woks were broken up for steelmaking. For some projects, laborers were shifted from one village to another without payment. The whole country seemed in a fever. The commune was one "big rice pot". Farmers worked for it, but they did not get anything from it except three meals a day in mess halls. In Nanwu village, when people recalled the Communization, the

things that most impressed them were that the food was bad and not enough. Only cooks could fill their bellies. Such a situation could not last long. A few months later there was no grain for the mess halls. The rapidly established social structure collapsed. A great famine followed. Edward Friedman described this situation in another village:

The mess halls were linked to a free-food policy that made food available with few restrictions and little bookkeeping. Wugong Commune, like others, printed blue food coupons that allowed the holder to eat free anywhere in the commune.

Many poor Raoyang villagers nonetheless ate their fill at the free mess halls after the fall harvest, happily commenting, "This is communism." Some mess halls even offered meat, but meat and grain swiftly disappeared. By the dearth of winter 1958-59, villagers considered themselves fortunate if they had held back a pot from the iron and steel campaign.⁸

Today, no one doubts that the commune system and its creator, Mao, should be held responsible for the great famine from 1959 to 1962. No death figures were published until Mao's death. It is estimated that "10 million people died of 'unnatural causes' (i.e., starvation)",⁹ as revealed by a noted Chinese economist Sung Yefang in 1981. Some reports estimated the death figure up to "at least 20 to 25 million".¹⁰

There were serious disputes on the agricultural policy among the CPC top leaders. Despite the disaster, Mao refused to give up his experiment, but made adjustments both in ideology and in practice. The socialist principle of "each does his best, to each according to his work" was pushed

forward to replace the previous communist principle of "each does his best, to each according to his need." During the three years of the great famine, land was temporarily distributed to households and farmers were assigned production quotas. The private plot and the free market were resumed. In 1962 the whole country passed through its most difficult period. Upon the recovery of the economy, Mao immediately initiated the Socialist Education Movement (the SEM) in the countryside. Through the SEM, the commune expanded its power again and took back the temporarily distributed land. But the commune system after the SEM was quite different from that in 1958. The production team became the basic accounting unit which was in charge of production and distribution. Land was owned by the team rather than by the commune as formerly. The workpoint was introduced into the system as measurement for the socialist principle of "more work, more payment" and "each does his best, to each according to his work." The private plot was allowed to be maintained by the farmer. The "big rice pot" remained, but was reduced to a smaller size. Due to these changes, the commune system survived and gradually became consolidated. In the following seventeen years the commune system supplied food for 800 million people. The final form of the commune system did not resemble Mao's original design, but the combination of Mao's idea and the harsh

reality. The existence of the commune saved Mao's political face.

Since the MAT in early 1950s, models were set up. The most famous one was Dazhai Brigade in Xiyang County, Shanxi Province. Mao instructed the whole country "to learn from Dazhai in agriculture." The leader of Dazhai Brigade, Chen Yonggui, was seated as a vice-premier. The other two well-known models were Wugong Cooperative in Raoyang County headed by Geng Changsuo, and the Paupers' Cooperative in Zunhua County headed by Wang Guofan. Both were in Hebei Province and both developed into the model collectives. Unlike the urbanized models for sightseeing foreigners mentioned before, these three "national models" were set up for Chinese farmers. One of them, Wugong Commune, was carefully studied by Edward Friedman, Paul G. Pickowicz and Mark Selden in the post-Mao period. Besides these "national models", every province had its own "regional models." For example, in Hunan Province, the regional models were Luota Commune and Yejiping Brigade. The commune system was also forcefully practiced in pasture areas of Mongolia, Tibet, and all places inhabited by minorities.

Chapter 3

ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTION OF THE COMMUNE

The commune was both the lowest unit of public administration and the highest ranked unit of the three-level organization of the collective economy. Above it were the county, prefecture and province, and below it were the brigade and team. Each county contained 10 to 20 communes and each commune contained about a dozen brigades.

The commune was a synthetic unit. It was not only organized for agricultural production, but had other economic as well as broader political and social functions. Each commune had a headquarters. The Jiuzhou Commune, for example, had a large walled compound containing Party Committee and administration offices. Important meetings were held there. In farmers' eyes, this compound was the symbol of authority.

Politically, the commune served as a relay station of the CPC. Its most important political tasks were to spread out Mao Zedong Thought, to distribute official documents of the CPC as well as to explain the CPC's policy. It was

responsible for political movements mobilized from above. It had full power to supervise, secure and enforce the CPC's political and economic policy. It also had to undertake any temporary tasks arranged by upper-level administrations, such as conscription, census-taking and so on and so forth.

Economically, the commune guided and controlled taxation, production and distribution (I will discuss these aspects later). All the agricultural production was conducted by teams, but the commune had organizations to serve production. In the Jiuzhou Commune, these organizations included the Grain Storage Station, Weather Station, Tractor Station, Fine-Seeds Popularizing Station and Veterinarian Station. All these organizations were non-profit. The Tractor Station would turn soil in late autumn for teams one after another at the charge of 0.90 yuan per *mu* (1 *mu* = 0.1647 acre or 666 square meters). The price was barely enough to cover the cost of fuel. But teams could not ask the Tractor Station to offer services at other times. If some money were made by the commune organizations, it would not be distributed to teams, but used for "strengthening the collective economy", the term for buying farm equipment for the commune itself.

Among the above organizations, the Grain Storage Station hired the most people. The Tractor Station and Veterinarian Station offered a number of service to the teams. The Weather Station and Fine-Seeds Popularizing Station existed

as the outreach for the county. As far as I know, the Weather Station never functioned. Some organizations in the Jiuzhou Commune had only existed on paper. In the areas close to cities, communes could run some profitable enterprises and workshops which served the urban population. In places far away from cities, a commune's service organizations would be fewer and operate on a smaller scale.

The commune was responsible for protecting and accumulating production forces. For example, in my team, a farm ox became too old to work. The team could not kill it unless it acquired permission from the Commune Veterinarian Station. My team was allowed to terminate the life of the ox after submitting several reports. Teams could send their pregnant horses, donkeys, and sick cattle to the Veterinarian Station for a simple, but proper treatment free of charge or for a minimal charge.

The commune had coordination power within its realm. It recruited manpower from its brigades and teams for public works that transcended the scope of the brigades. This power went unchecked, and later on it led to the abuse of authority.

The commune had its social functions. Every commune had to have one middle school and one clinic. In the Jiuzhou Commune, the middle school and the clinic were in poor condition compared to those in cities. The middle school was free. The clinic charged little for each treatment. As a

matter of fact, very few people went to the Commune Clinic. Many brigades had "barefoot doctors." If farmers got serious ills, they would go to county hospitals. The Jiuzhou Commune also had one shop and one restaurant. Both were small. About a half dozen people worked in the shop. Besides selling daily necessities and small farming tools, the shop also purchased family products. Farmers often traded their eggs for salt, vinegar, soy sauce, cloth and needles. The restaurant was even smaller with two to three working there. The shop and the restaurant were the only two semi-commercial organizations in the Jiuzhou Commune. There were no day care centers for children, nor homes for old people. There were no branches of commercial banks. In my two years there, I never knew anyone who had a bank account. The commune was also responsible for local security. Because local security was no problem, only a couple of commune officials were posted for it.

In the Jiuzhou Commune between 200 and 400 people worked in commune level organizations. Ninety-nine percent of these "non-production personnel" came from the commune's teams and only 1% were appointed by the state through the county. But this 1% was placed in the highest rank of the executive administration. They belonged to the system of state ownership. Like city people, they were paid monthly in cash and received food coupons and other coupons from the state. They were viewed as the privileged people in the

countryside. The other 99% of people working in the commune accumulated workpoints in their teams and received 20 cents each day from the commune as allowance. All the people working at the commune level were admired by farmers. They did less physical work and were better paid. It was not difficult to tell these people from the peasantry by their less sun-cooked faces. In Mao's last years, the rapid growth of non-production personnel on the commune level became a heavy burden for farmers.

The commune was a multi-functional unit which covered almost every aspect of the farmers' lives except legal affairs. But in legal affairs it cooperated closely with legal organs within its realm. Here, it should be noted that probably most legal questions which in the West fall under the judiciary are handled by various levels of administrations in China. A farmer rarely dealt with any organizations beyond his commune. Many people have described the functions of the commune. Immanuel C. Y. Hsu draws the best conclusion when he says that many affairs "are channeled into a single entity."¹¹ The commune's responsibility was unlimited. And for this reason, the commune was unable to fulfill its responsibilities well, especially in welfare affairs. Almost no commune ran day care centers for children and homes for old people. The teaching level of middle school was far less competent than that in cities. The clinic not only lacked equipment, but

also trained personnel. Some important welfare programs found in cities did not exist in the communes. However, as an instrument of the CPC, the commune was very effective in some other affairs, for example, in the planned economy and egalitarianism. These will be discussed later.

Chapter 4

ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTION OF THE PRODUCTION BRIGADE

In most cases one village was one brigade. The size of a brigade could be very different from as small as containing a single team to as large as containing 20 teams. William L, Parish and Martin King Whyte described the brigade functions as follows:

The brigade has a number of administrative functions. In consultation with the teams below and the commune above, it helps set production targets and compulsory quotas for grain, animals, and vegetables. It helps to allocate fertilizer, new machinery, and production supplies. It frequently owns and operates small industries, such as brick factories, oil presses, and repair stations for agricultural implements. It is likely to manage and finance at least one primary school, and typically it has a veterinarian and a health station with one or more barefoot doctors and midwives.¹²

Theoretically, the brigade had these functions and could do the things above. Actually, organizations on the brigade level could be from as simple as only one man with one room for the brigade office to as complicated as an economic section. The complexity of a brigade depended on its location and economic conditions. Under the CPC's policy of

"Grain as the key link in agriculture", few brigades ran enterprises. Many of Nanwu's neighbor brigades did not have any organizations besides the administration office. The Nanwu village was larger, so it had more brigade-level organizations.

The brigade had the same political functions as the commune, but its administration was simple. The Brigade Party Branch which comprised 5 people was responsible for anything channelled into the brigade. Under the Brigade Party Branch, there was not any administration section. Like the commune, the brigade coordinated economic functions. It would assign labor quotas to its teams when required by upper level administrations. It recruited laborers for transteam projects. Most brigades did not own landed property. Only in a few cases, brigades owned transteam property. For example, there was a lake which belonged to a whole village rather than a particular team. The brigade would manage it on behalf of its teams.

Nanwu was well known for its fruit production. Unlike its neighbors, Nanwu Brigade had an economic section. It managed a fruit orchard. Besides five production teams, there was the Orchard Team. The Orchard Team differed from the other five production teams in many ways (The production team will be discussed in the next chapter). It was only responsible for fruit production. The income would go to the brigade. By the end of each year, the brigade would distribute 52% of

the Orchard Team's net income among the other five production teams. The rest would be kept for the production of the next year. The Orchard Team did not distribute products to villagers, but sold 98% of its produce to the state. The sale of fruit had a different channel. Instead of the commune, a state agent in a nearby railway station purchased fruit and shipped it to Tianjin. Villagers could buy fruit without cash. Debts would be transferred to the buyers' team for accounting. The production teams sent their assigned laborers to the Orchard Team. Orchard laborers' workpoints were transferred to teams for distribution. In Nanwu, no one received any compensation from the Orchard Team or the brigade, but only from the production teams. The brigade coordinated production activities between the Orchard Team and the production teams. The Orchard Team had no means of transportation, but it needed to transport fruit from the village to a nearby railway station. The brigade assigned horse-drawn carts for use of the Orchard Team. Sometimes team leaders bargained with the brigade for fewer assignments. Because the brigade managed an orchard, it controlled some funds. In 1970, the brigade bought a four-wheel tractor for transportation. Nanwu became the first brigade to own a tractor in the Jiuzhou Commune.

In Nanwu Brigade, the public service institutions were a primary school with 3 teachers, a clinic with 2 barefoot doctors, a grocery store with 1 manager, an electric mill

with 2 workers, and a brigade headquarters which had 1 broadcaster and brigade cash accountant, who was in charge of daily work, 2 tractor drivers, and 2 electricians. All these people and members of the Brigade Party Branch came from the five teams. Their work would be recorded by the brigade and their workpoints would be transferred to their teams for distribution. Like all the brigades in that area, Nanwu did not have any enterprises.

Each brigade organized one militia unit whose members were young people from families with good backgrounds. The militia members were instructed to fight against the possible invasion from the Soviet Union and the United States. They had no special training, nor experts to train them. The only weapons they had were several rifles. There were no economic benefits for any militia member. Their activities were conducted in their spare time. As a matter of fact, nobody took their militia membership seriously. The militia was also responsible for local security. The brigade had the right to choose persons for conscription, for the positions in the commune level organizations, and for any other likely glorious things. The criteria for being chosen was the family background of these people and their political performance.

Many descriptions of the brigade are ideal. They either ignored differences between brigades or overestimated the brigade's capacity of managing welfare facilities. Jurgen

Domes says: "The brigades were responsible for the management of primary schools and, in many cases, kindergartens and day nurseries."¹³ But in fact, few brigades ran kindergartens and day nurseries across the country. Only the big brigade ran a primary school. Nanwu had a primary school. It accepted children for free, including a few from a small neighboring village.

Chapter 5

PRODUCTION TEAM

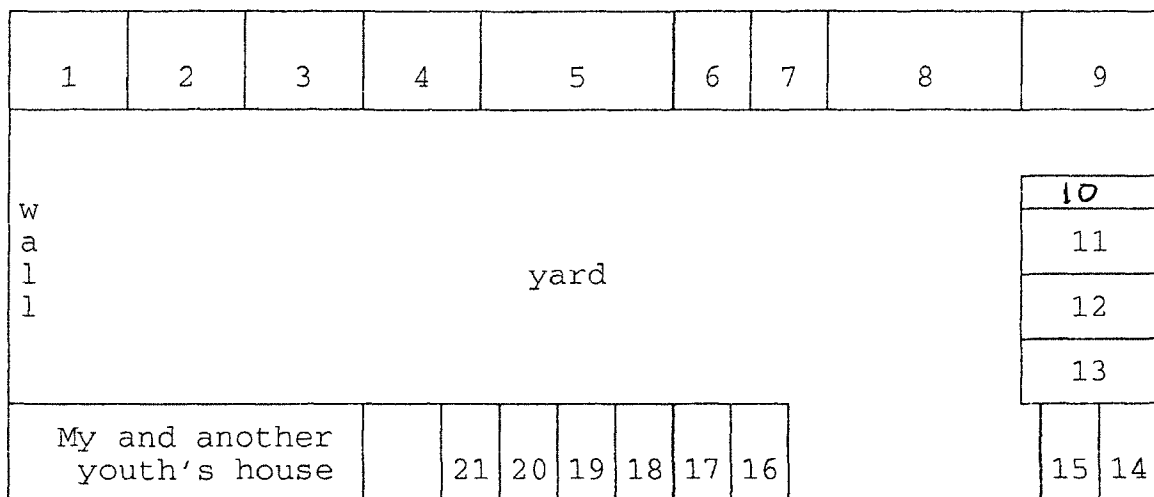
For a farmer, the production team was the most important collective unit. His life was intimately tied to his team. He could not chose to work for anybody else, but for his team. He received almost all means of livelihood from it. The production team could be called the cell of political and economic organization in the countryside.

PROPERTY

The most important collective property, of course, was land. Theoretically, all the land belonged to the state. But because the team used the land permanently, the team members viewed the land as their own. If the state needed some land for building roads or railways, it had to pay money for the land it requisitioned. In the countryside, most land, including private plots, belonged to teams. Communes and brigades owned little arable land or none at all. In Nanwu Brigade, all the farm land belonged to five teams, and the orchard land belonged to the brigade. The teams could plant

peanuts and sweet potatoes on orchard land wherever fruit trees were small. The Third Team of Nanwu Brigade owned about 500 *mu* of land, or an average of 1.8 *mu* for each person. The traditional collective land described by Fei Hsiao-tung¹⁴ and owned by clans, family shrines, temples, teaching societies, Confucius clubs, old fraternities and so forth before 1949 no longer existed.

Other team properties included a team headquarters compound where things were stored; a threshing ground of about half a *mu* and three storage rooms which also functioned as guard room and general resting place with a *kang* (a masonry sleeping platform which is heated by running the stove flues through it); and a vegetable garden of about 1.5 *mu* and a small shed. The headquarter compound was much more complicated than the brigade headquarters which just had three rooms as an office. The following is a diagram of the Third Team headquarters compound.



1. room for cooking pigs' food; 2. room for making tofu; 3. storeroom for seeds; 4. The team office and accountants' office; 5. shed for cattle; 6. room for cattle tender; 7. room for horse tender; 8. shed for horses; 9.13. storeroom for tools; 10. shed for brood mares; 11-12. shed for carts; 14-21. pigsty.

The compound was a rectangular in shape about forty meters long and twenty meters wide. Almost all the moveable property was kept in this compound. It was used for raising livestock and pigs, and for storing seeds, chemical fertilizer and farm tools. The ground was used for stacking hay and fuel. In spring, it would be used as a cold frame to start sweet potato plants. Most team meetings were held there. The compound also served as an entertainment place. Team members often went there for a chat or to play chess. There were no guards at night, but the cattle and horse tenders used to stay there and kept an eye on the property at night.

The most valuable moveable property was horses and mules. Animal power was very important for field farm work and transportation. Animal-drawn carts were the only transportation available in the countryside. The Third Team had 2 horse-drawn carts and 2 cattle-drawn carts. Cattle moved slowly and were not able to walk long on cement or tar-paved roads. So cattle were used for carts only when there were insufficient horses. The market price for a strong gelding was about 1,500 yuan. A strong mare or mule could be bought for between 3,000 and 4,000 yuan. A work ox was only about 150 yuan. The second most valuable moveable

property was cattle and carts. The team could not dispose of its land, but it could trade its moveable property with proper authorization.

PRIVATE PLOT

First, it should be pointed out that the words "private plot" are not a good translation for the Chinese words "ziliudi" which was invented during the collectivization period. During the early collectivization, the CPC's policy was to encourage farmers to integrate most of their land into the collective; meanwhile they were allowed to maintain a little piece of land for their own use. Literally, "ziliudi" means the "personal remaining plot". Obviously, the invention of the private plot was aimed at eliminating the possible resistance to collectivization. However, from the very beginning, the "private plot" was strongly criticized as the "capitalist tail" by the CPC. Mao's ultimate aim was to abolish it. The plan was not to cancel it right away, but to do it step by step. Anyone who was born before 1950, the year of the Land Reform, could receive a private plot of 0.1 *mu* in my area. If he/she died, his or her private plot would be integrated into the collective land, so in a team the amount land held in private plots would be reduced year by year, and ultimately, it would

disappear if the system continued. The ultimate ownership of the private plot belonged to the collective.

During my years in Nanwu, the private plot, except those around homesteads, were canceled and in their place people received 90 *jin* (1 *jin* = 1.1 pound) of grain from the team each year as an exchange. This kind of grain was called "ziliuliang." It was said that this was the first step toward cutting off the "capitalist tail". The big yards around people's houses were measured as one or two persons' private plots. About one-fourth of families in the Third Team had such plots. They usually grew vegetables and tobacco for the family's consumption and sold the rest for cash. It was one of the major sources of cash income for these families. In order to avoid being criticized as "going on the capitalist road," farmers only worked in their private plots in their spare time. The crops in the private plot were better than those from the team's land.

WORKPOINTS

The workpoint system was introduced to farmers around 1962. It was invented when the accounting unit was shifted from the commune to the production team. It also marked the transition from "each does his best, to each according to his need" to "each does his best; to each according to his

work". As a system, the workpoint was no less complicated than the cash salary system.

Workpoints included two important things: material rations and money. In most cases across the country, a strong man's daily workpoints were 10, and a strong woman's were 8. Children and aged people received fewer if they worked. In Nanwu Brigade in 1969, a strong man and woman's daily workpoints were 6 and 5 respectively. A person's daily workpoints were decided by the Team Committee. In the Third Team, people's daily workpoints were evaluated twice a year. A child usually began to work at the age of 15 to 17 with 2.5 to 3 daily workpoints to start. When he/she reached 18 to 19, he/she would be viewed as a full laborer and would receive full daily workpoints appropriate to their gender. An old person who was roughly over 65 would have fewer daily workpoints, because his/her physical condition would be considered in assigning work. I often heard people complaining about their daily workpoints. Such complaints were not strong because in a team, people aged between 19 to 65 received the same daily workpoints based on gender. If a man with daily workpoints of 5.5 was assigned the same work as a man with daily workpoints of 6, he would complain about unequal pay or even refused to accept that work. But if he did and showed himself equally as capable as the man with daily workpoints of 6, he would have a better chance to get a raise at the next evaluation meeting. Farmers did not have

any day off with workpoints. They could take a leave whenever they wanted without informing team leaders but the long-term job holders and those who were responsible for special jobs had to let the team leaders know if they needed a leave, because their leave would influence others' work.

In my last ten months, I was the workpoint recorder in the Third Team. The reason I had this job was partly because of my outsider status. I had no relatives there, so the team members were not worried about me doing something fraudulent. I did farm work in the day with one group of people. In the last hour or two in the day, I went to the places where groups of people were working. I recorded each person's work. After that I waited where the main road entered the village or at the team's headquarters for people to report their work. Anyone had the right to check my record book, but few did so. The main reason was that they trusted me. No one kept a record for themselves. The team had no chronicle for the jobs and the number of people working each day, so it was very difficult to verify a person's work several days before. Some people could not find me or I could not find them after a day's work. In these circumstances, they would record their work next day or even a few days later. In this case, my record would be based on their honesty. I tried to minimize the number of times this happened. Usually, 80% or more could record their work on the day they worked.

There were some people who tried to take advantage of this system. For example, they worked more days in winter, but fewer days in summer. One day's work in winter was about six hours, but in summer it was about 12 hours. The daily workpoints were a fixed number. In early 1970, the Third Team refined their workpoint system. A year was divided into three periods. People would get a different number of daily workpoints respectively. A strong man would make 6, 8, and 10 workpoints each day in different periods. A strong woman would make 5, 6.5, and 8. I also improved this system. In spring, summer and autumn, people worked three times each day--early morning before breakfast, morning and afternoon. Previously, people were given a number of workpoints for each time of work. For example, a full female laborer's workpoints in these three times were 1, 2, and 2. But a woman with daily workpoints of 4.8 were given 1, 1.9, and 1.9 workpoints respectively. Instead I gave workpoints with the ratio of 1 : 2 : 2. My method was adopted without any discussion and all the team members thought that my method was more fair.

Workpoints provided rations and money. But the team members did not know the value of their workpoints until the annual final account at the end of a year. If they had a good harvest, the standard workpoints (10 workpoints) would be worth more money and commanded more agricultural products. If they had a bad year, they would have less. In

Nanwu Brigade, the five teams were not at the same level. Some were better off than others. This team did better this year and that team the next year. Generally, a strong man's daily work (6 workpoints) was worth 0.70 to 0.90 yuan in cash.

DECISION-MAKING

In a team decisions were made by the Team Committee and the Team Leader. The highest authority in a team, the Team Committee, was composed of 3 to 7 people. Some were appointed by the Brigade Party Branch and some were chosen by the appointed members. The percentage of Communist Party members in the rural population was much lower than in cities, but the CPC members were not taken for granted as leaders. Experience and physical strength were the most important qualifications for leadership. All the committee members had to be confirmed at a team plenary meeting. In most cases, nobody spoke out against them in the plenary meeting. Few people wanted to be committee members. In early 1970, the Third Team had a hard time organizing a committee, because several capable people refused to participate.

The Team Committee had several functions. First of all, it made plans for production, i.e., it decided which crops and how much were to be planted in which piece of land. In making a plan the committee must adhere to the Party's

policy of "grain as the key link" and meet quotas issued by the commune. "Freedom of plantation" was criticized as a capitalist idea. To a great degree, the Team Committee could only decide where to grow assigned crops, rather than choosing crops (We will discuss this problem later). Second, it assigned people jobs. It assigned some people long-term jobs, some people to the Orchard Team and some were left in the team to do farm work. If a labor force was required by upper-level administrations, the Team Committee would decide who should be sent to undertake that work. In assigning jobs the committee members tried to balance families in the team. They would let each family have one member in a good position. Some good positions were rotated annually. To be a Laborer in the Orchard Team was an example. The Team Committee did not assign daily work. Third, it evaluated each member's work and determined his daily workpoints. Such evaluations were held twice a year. Fourth, it appointed assistant team leaders. Most assistant team leaders were young persons. Fifth, by the end of a year they drew up a final distribution plan which must be ratified by the commune. After the final distribution, the Team Committee would be reorganized and a new farming year started. The Committee members' term was one year.

In a team, only the Team Committee had the right to dispose of the team's moveable property. They would decide what to buy, what to sell, how to spend the team's funds,

and how to raise funds for production. Now let us see an example of how a decision was made. In the spring of 1970, the Third Team's Committee decided to raise more pigs in order to get more manure for farm land, but the team did not have enough money to buy pigs. The Team Committee held several meetings and at last it decided to sell a red male horse for that purpose. The horse was sold for 1,650 yuan in a local market and 16 pigs were bought. The team members often complained about the committee's decisions, but they had no way to change or stop them. As a matter of fact, few people came out to express their different ideas, but they criticized them behind the Committee's backs. If the Team Committee made a wrong decision which led to a loss, all team members had to share the loss. In the above example, quite a few pigs died within two months after they were bought. Many team members complained about the Committee's decision and said the Committee members were stupid. But that was all they could do. Nobody tried to impeach the committee members or tried to take their place. Sometimes, a plenary meeting was held. People could give their suggestions or ratify a decision made by the Team Committee. Plenary meetings were held two to three times a year but at no set time. Usually, the plenary meetings were held to announce the final distribution plan and the new Team Committee members. The Team Committee's authority was confined to economic affairs. It had no authority to settle

disputes between individuals and families, and no right to choose men for conscription or positions in the upper level organizations. The brigade was responsible for these affairs.

The Team Leader was one of the Team Committee members. His responsibility was to carry out the plan and the decision made by the Team Committee. He would assign daily work to the team laborers except some of those who were given long-term jobs, special jobs, and those who worked in the Orchard Team. He would bestow on an assistant team leader the right to lead one group of people to work at one time of the day. He himself would lead one group too. Some assistant leaders were women because it was necessary to have them lead groups of women to work. The Team Committee members and the team leaders did not receive extra workpoints for their work.

DIVISION OF LABOR

Most farm work was done by human laborers and animals. In a team no one was free from farm work, except little children and very old people. The "leisure class" and the "landless class" described by Fei Hsiao-tung¹⁵ before Communist rule no longer existed. There was a clear division of labor in farm work. Men undertook the heavier and more skilled work. While women, children and old people did easier jobs. Most long-term jobs were taken by men. Long-

term jobs were ones that were not influenced by the weather. In the Third Team, the long-term job positions included one maintenance worker, one tofu maker, one tofu seller, two pig tenders, one tender for cattle, and one tender for horses, donkeys and mules. Five team members held long-term jobs in the brigade: one teacher, one electrician, one shop manager, one miller, and one brigade cash accountant and broadcaster. Some were given seasonal jobs such as in the vegetable garden and in the threshing ground. There were also four drivers for horse or cattle-drawn carts. The above jobs, except school teacher, were held by men. My team had to send about a dozen laborers each year to the Orchard Team. The orchard work needed less physical exertion, so except for a few orchard experts required by the Orchard Team, most positions were filled by women. I did not need to record workpoints of the above people day by day. Their workpoints were either transferred from the brigade or calculated with mathematic multiplication.

The rest of the team laborers, including team leaders and two accountants, would do the major farm work. These people made up about 60% of the total team laborers. They were assigned work day by day or in most cases, for a part of the day. Each team had a gathering place. In the Third Team, the gathering place was in the middle of the residential area and in the main street in front of the house of the Team Leader, Qiu Changchun (see the map in Appendix A). In Qiu's

yard, a piece of iron rail was hung on a tree. He hit it with an iron stick for about two dozen times. The people who decided to work that day would go to the gathering place for assignments. Because each day was divided into three working times, so the Team Leader would hit the bell (as people called it) three times and people would get together three times each day. The Team Leader had a full right to make decisions in this circumstance. But he had to consider people's sexes and ages. It took about half an hour from the time when the Team Leader hit the bell to the time when the assignment was made. The first person usually appeared at the gathering place 15 minutes after the bell was sounded. So Qiu Changchun usually used this time to carry home well water twice or three times. The leaders of other teams did the same thing. After the assignment people would go home or to the team's headquarters to pick up the farm tools they needed, and then went to the field. It took about one hour from the time of the bell to when people began to work. Nobody had a wrist watch. Many families had a clock, but nobody was punctual. People acted according to the position of the sun or their estimation. When the sun rose, people began to work. When the sun set, people came back from the fields.

People with special skills such as carpenters and bricklayers who worked on housing were allowed to work outside of the team. During the commune period, a farmer's

most important property was his house instead of land as it had used to be. Without a house, a young man had less chance to get married. Because of their skills, carpenters and bricklayers were respected by other people. Among them, carpenters were highly admired, because they were so needed everywhere. Li Yongde and Sun Defeng were the carpenters in the Third Team. For most of a year, they worked around from village to village and county to county. They were paid 2 yuan in cash and offered free excellent meals each day by the farmer whose home they built. Lodging was never commercialized in the countryside. The employer must provide room for carpenters and bricklayers. A carpenter's daily income was about 3 to 4 times as much as that of common villagers. Carpenters and bricklayers must get consent from the Team Committee to work outside of the team. At the busiest time, they had to come back to the team to do farm work. They also had to hand over about one-fourth to one-half of their earnings to the team for the exchange of workpoints. The exchange rate was 2 yuan for 10 workpoints (10 workpoints were worth 1.08 yuan in 1969 in the Third Team and a man's daily workpoints were 6). The reason for these limitations was that although they did not do farm work, their families enjoyed the low-priced farm products produced by other team members. The team was their families' only source of food. For they could not get grain anywhere else. For a time in 1970, the Team Committee in the Third

Team banned the two carpenters, Li Yongde and Sun Defeng, from working outside on grounds that it was too capitalist.

The wheat harvesting took place in the middle of summer when the weather was terribly hot and the wheat must be harvested in a short time. To pull wheat up was the heaviest work in my area. In wheat harvesting time, everybody must return from brigade organizations, the Orchard Team or other places to his team to help with harvesting. The school had a break at that time. If a person escaped from wheat harvesting, he would be thought to have no right to his portion.

DISTRIBUTION

The workpoint was the measurement of both people's contribution and distribution. In Nanwu Brigade, more than 90% of a farmer's necessities came from his team. The remaining came from family sidelines and the private plot. Trade was insignificant in their lives. Two necessities most farmers had to buy were salt and cloth.

Distribution in a team followed the rigid principles molded by the state. The goods for distribution were divided into two parts: one according to the number of individuals, the other according to workpoints. The ratio between the two parts was 7 : 3. Anyone, no matter worked or not, was basically allotted an amount of the team's products.

Workpoints added more to him/her. Workpoints also included money which a farmer needed to cover the price of his total allotted products. In order to understand this system well, let us see an example.

The Third Team harvested 36,000 *jin* of wheat in a summer. Of 36,000 *jin*, 2,000 *jin* were reserved for seeds; 4,000 *jin* went to the commune as the state tax; and the remaining 30,000 *jin* would be distributed among the team members. Seventy percent of 30,000 *jin*, i.e., 21,000 *jin*, would be divided by 278, the total number of team members. No matter man or woman, old or young, each person would receive a portion of 75.5 *jin*. Thirty percent of 30,000 *jin*, i.e., 9,000 *jin* would be divided by about 60,000 workpoints, the total the team had accumulated from January 1 to the end of May--the time of wheat harvesting. Every 10 workpoints would be allotted 1.5 *jin* of wheat. For example, for a Family A with four members, a young couple, one child and an old man--the husband's father, their daily workpoints, working days and total workpoints until the end of May were as follow:

	<u>Daily wkpts</u>	<u>Working days</u>	<u>Total wkpts</u>
Husband	6	140	840
Wife	5	120	600
husband's father	5	50	250
Family's total wkpts	--	--	1,690

Their total allotted wheat would be as follow:

<u>Amount According to heads</u>	<u>Amount According to wkpts</u>	<u>Total Amount of wheat</u>
75.5x4 = 302	1.5x1690/10 = 253.5	302+253.5 = 555.5

Family A received 555.5 *jin* of wheat this summer. Its portion for workpoints made up 46% of the total allotted wheat. Family A was the one with more laborers and fewer children. So its portion from workpoints was higher than the average of 30%.

Distribution places could be anywhere in the team's realm. The grain was distributed in the threshing ground after it was dried. Sweet potatoes and corn stalks (used for fuel) were distributed in the field when they were harvested. Vegetables were distributed in the vegetable garden. Meat was distributed in the team compound where pigs were killed. When a product was in a small amount, the portion for workpoints might be ignored. For example, the amount of sesame was so small that everyone was just allotted about one *jin* a year. In this case, the sesame was only distributed according to the number of people. When some products could not be distributed to all people, drawing lots would be applied. For example, three pigs were killed and the meat was distributed according to the number of people and workpoints. The pig heads, hearts, livers, feet and so on would be distributed according to drawing lots. In order to give people an equal chance, each family was only allowed to bid for one part of a pig. There was no modern system to inform people of distribution. Team members informed each other. Sometimes the team leaders informed people in the gathering place.

We should notice that team members did not receive goods for free. The price of the distributed goods would be deducted from the amount of money their total workpoints were worth at the end of a year. The following chart is the goods Family A could roughly receive from the team in a year as well as the price of these goods.

<u>Categories</u>	<u>Amount(jin)</u>	<u>Unit Price(yuan)</u>	<u>Total(yuan)</u>
Wheat	555	0.15	83.25
Corn	850	0.10	85.00
Soybean	20	0.10	2.00
Other grains	20	0.10	2.00
Sweet Potato	1,200	0.02	24.00
Vegetables	200	0.02	4.00
Meat	20	0.50	10.00
Cotton	10	0.80	8.00
Oil products	10	0.50	5.00
Fuel (corn stalk, cotton stalk, tree branch, and so on)			40.00
Other things			40.00
Total value	---	---	303.25

The price of the distributed goods was about 20% to 50% lower than the market price. Many goods had a unique price. For example, any kind of vegetables was 0.02 yuan a *jin*. Some things were free, for example, the tofu remains and tree leaves. Besides the goods, team members also received money from the team by the end of a year, if the value of their total workpoints was larger than the cost of their allotted goods.

The final team account was the most concerned thing to all team members. It included two important figures. One was the grain ration, the other was the value of the workpoints. Both had to be ratified by the commune administration (this

will be explained later). Only at this time, could people know how much their daily work was worth and how much their whole year's income was. In the Third Team in 1969, these two figures were 400 *jin* and 1.08 yuan (10 workpoints). A strong male laborer's daily workpoints amounted to 6, so his daily work was worth 0.648 yuan. People talked a lot about these two figures at this time of year. They compared their own figures with other teams' and other villages'. The grain figure was considered more important than the money figure.

After these two figures were declared, the last distribution, the make-up distribution would be conducted. It was calculated as follow: the amount of make-up distribution was equal to the total amount of grain that a family should get in a year minus the total amount of grain the family already received in the past distributions. Corn was used for this distribution. The amount of money a family would receive followed the following formula: The amount of money received was equal to the value of total workpoints - minus the total price of the received goods. Let us continue the example of Family A. Family A made 4,050 workpoints in the whole year which were worth 437.40 yuan. After a deduction of 303.25 yuan for the received goods, Family A could receive 134.15 yuan in cash. If the value of a family's total workpoints could not cover the total price of the received goods, this family would owe money to the team.

In 1969, two families in the Third Team owed money to the team.

The average cost for one person's distributed goods was about 75 yuan. In other words, a strong man's 116 days of work could balance the cost of one person's distributed goods. The average of one person's bonus deducted from the cost of the distributed goods was about 25 yuan. Thus, the annual per capita income was about 100 yuan. William Parish gave an example in a team in Guangdong. There the annual per capita income was 102.50 yuan, of which 38 yuan was distributed in cash.¹⁶

Chapter 6

COMMUNE'S ROLE IN THE PLANNED ECONOMY

The commune as an instrument of the CPC was very effective in the planned economy because it carried the state agricultural policy of "Grain as the key link" sufficiently.

The state controlled the team through the commune by two important means. One was that the agricultural tax was paid in kind instead of in currency. With this tax system, the government had an easier control of farmers' production activities than in a cash tax system. My team was in the grain production area. Wheat, corn and dried sweet potato chips were the major products for tax. The amount of tax was about 10 percent of total grain production. The other means was the CPC's policy of monopoly of purchasing and marketing of grain, cotton, and oil. Grain, cotton, and oil were classified as the first class of agricultural products by the government. Any trade of these on the market or between teams was illegal.

I explained the functions of the Team Committee before and said that the team's role was confined to economic affairs.

However, its power in the economy was limited. For example, in terms of value, one *mu*'s cotton could be five times as much as one *mu*'s corn. But the team committee could not make a decision to grow more cotton. If it made such a decision, all of the team members might go hungry. The team could not sell cotton anywhere, and could not buy grain anywhere either. As a matter of fact, no team committee members were foolish enough to make such a decision, because they could not benefit much from this decision. To the contrary, they took the risk of being punished. In making a plan, the Team Committee must first consider the Party's policy, and second, producing enough food for its team members. Economic benefits were not considered. The team's plan had to be ratified by the commune, the only organization authorized to deal with the first-class of agricultural products. If a team had a grain surplus and did not want to keep them, it could only sell them to the commune. There was no exchange of grain between teams and individuals in markets.

The commune not only carried out the CPC's policy mechanically and supervised its teams' production, but also guided the teams' production. The commune made a plan each year. It often organized meetings for brigade and team leaders to explain the state policy and the commune's plan. Each team had to report their amount of land for major crops--wheat and corn. Wheat, corn, and sweet potatoes used 90% of my team's land. The commune kept detailed statistics

of the planting in its realm. Here is how the Jiuzhou Commune organized wheat production. Wheat was viewed as the preferred crop by the farmers in north China and wheat flour was much in demand by the cities. In spring, the commune leaders assigned tax quotas in the form of wheat and assigned percentages of land for wheat growing. At times the commune leaders decided which land was to be used for which crops. The Jiuzhou Commune ordered all the teams which had farm lands along the tar-paved road to grow wheat on these lands, and it also ordered the teams to pour more manpower and material resources into these lands, because these lands would first catch the eyes of visitors and passersby. The commune supplied chemical fertilizer for these lands first. In 1973, when I came back to Nanwu for a visit, I found that twice as much land as in 1970 was planted to wheat. The change was the result of the state plan and was carried out by the commune.

The commune also carried out any CPC policy on any specific agricultural product. Meat was among the second-rate agricultural products. Before 1969, the Jiuzhou Commune took a *laissez-faire* attitude toward pork production. Most commercial pork was produced by individual families. In 1970, pork meat was in short supply in cities. Pork coupons were resumed after they had disappeared for several years. The state adopted a method to stimulate pork production. The Jiuzhou Commune told its people that anyone who sold a pig

to the Commune's Grain Storage Station would be rewarded with an amount of grain coupons equivalent to the pig's weight. Farmers knew the government policy only through the commune, not from radio and newspaper. Farmers did not know, and also did not care where the policy was from, from the state or from the province.

Chapter 7

COMMUNE'S ROLE IN EGALITARIANISM

"Don't worry about poverty, but worry about inequality." This was the famous saying of Lao Zi, a philosopher twenty-five centuries ago. Egalitarianism was the top goal which had been pursued by rulers in various dynasties before the Communist Party. At any rate, the Communists did better than their predecessors. The commune system could be said to have carried out the principle of egalitarianism perfectly.

The commune had the means to reach equality between individuals in a team and between teams in the commune. The distribution ratio we discussed before guaranteed the equality of living materials within a team. In most places, the ratio was 7 : 3. Fewer places adopted the ratio of 8 : 2 or 6 : 4. The ratio of 8 : 2 was more favorable for the family with fewer laborers and more children. The ratio of 6 : 4 was more favorable for the family with more laborers and fewer children. The commune set a unique ratio for its teams. The team and brigade could not choose a ratio. Now,

let us continue the example of Family A I gave before, and compare it with Family B in the same team. Family B also had four people, a young couple and their two children. The woman in Family B had to take care of children, so in this family, only the man worked in the team. The man worked 140 days from January 1 to May 31 with 840 workpoints earned. The total allotted wheat of Family B would be as follow:

<u>Amount according to heads</u>	<u>Amount According to wkpts</u>	<u>Total Amount of wheat</u>
75.5x4 = 302	1.5x840/10 = 126	302+126 = 428

Family B received 428 *jin* of wheat. Compared to Family A's 1,690 workpoints and 555.5 *jin* of allotted wheat, Family B's contribution to the team was only 50% of Family A's. However, Family B's amount of allotted wheat was 77% of Family A's. Although more workpoints meant more money at the end of a year, the grain was regarded as the more important index of living standards. The families which had debts to the team also had the right to get their portions. Under this rule of distribution, every family had roughly the same kind and same amount of food for each person. The families which received less material usually had more children. Before the communist rule, farmers had different kinds of food. Yang Mou-ch'un divided a village into four classes on the basis of food consumption. "At the lowest level is the group for whom sweet potatoes are the main item of diet; next are those who have a combination of sweet potatoes and

millet; third, those who eat millet and wheat; and at the top, those who eat mainly wheat."¹⁷ This circumstance did not exist in the commune system.

The commune had two means to equalize its teams distribution, equalizing the grain ration and equalizing the value of workpoints. We cannot find these principles in government documents. The progressive taxation guaranteed the equality in grain ration. In my area, the grain ration for one person was fixed from no more than 420 *jin* to no less than 330 *jin* by the state. If a team wanted to have a higher grain ration for its team members, it had to meet the progressive taxation. The progressive taxation was not a fixed rate but fluctuated according to harvests. The commune compared different teams' grain tax and then decided the grain ration for each team. If a team had a very poor harvest and was not able to meet 330 *jin* a person, the commune would resell some to the team to meet this minimum figure. If a team had a very good harvest, and after paying tax, it had some grain left, it could sell the grain to the state, raise more pigs, or store some. Distribution of surplus grain was forbidden.

In deciding the value of workpoints, the power of the commune's administration was used directly. The value of 10 workpoints was decided by the following formula:

The total value of distributed goods + %
 The value of money the Team had at the end of a year
 of 10 workpoints ==-----
 10% of the whole team's workpoints

The percentage of money in the numerator was decided by the commune. Obviously, a larger percentage of money in the numerator would lead to more value for the 10 workpoints. The commune administration would let, for example, a better-off team put 40% of its net money in the numerator, and let a poor team put 80% in the numerator. The rest would be used for the next year's production. The various teams' contribution--grain tax--to the state would also be considered. Considering that the value of the distributed goods was about 3 times as much as the amount of money allowed to be distributed by the commune, the difference of the value of 10 workpoints among teams was insignificant. In 1969, the teams' 10 workpoints in Nanwu Brigade was worth a range of 1.08 to 1.40 yuan.

In a smaller area, the above means were workable, but in terms of the whole country, the gap seemed still unbridgeable. The value of daily workpoints differed from as high as 4 to 5 yuan in a team in a city's suburbs to as low as only 0.20 yuan in a team in remote areas.

Chapter 8

TEAM'S ROLE IN LARGE SCALE PROJECTS

In the 1960s and 1970s, China built and rebuilt many river banks, dams, reservoirs, and roads which were admired by many foreigners. The Communist Party was also very proud of these achievements. For many people, it was unimaginable to finish these large scale projects without enough funds and modern equipment. However, what they did not know was that the production team played an important role in supporting these projects. Now let us see how a project was organized and how the team supported it financially.

The Hai River drainage area covered two-thirds of the area in Hebei Province. Its major five branches joined at Tianjin and provided water for this third largest city in China. In a vast area, Hai River was the only channel to the sea. In 1964, unexpected amounts of rain exceeded the river's drainage capacity. In order to prevent Tianjin from flooding, several sections of the river's major branches were dynamited, causing huge damage to rural areas. In that

year, Mao issued a call that "The Hai River must be harnessed." The plan for harnessing the Hai River was grand. It included digging 7 water channels to the sea, strengthening river banks, building protection banks (second banks along rivers), and reservoirs. All these works were largely carried out by the team. In each late autumn after harvesting and early spring before planting, the team would receive labor quotas for this project from the brigade through the commune. The laborers for this project were called "the river laborers." Each time the Third Team was assigned 2 to 5 persons. It was about 2-5% of the whole team's laborers. The recruited persons must be male, young and strong. Only 20% of laborers in the team were able to stand this work. The expenditures for the river laborers were shared by the team and the state. During their work, the team gave the river laborers full payment of workpoints. Some teams gave them 20% more workpoints. The team also supplied tools. The tools were simple--one wheelbarrow and one spade for one person. Usually, the river laborers had to spend 2 to 4 days to push their wheelbarrows with their quilts and spades to the appointed place, so the team paid an allowance to them for the trip. The Third Team paid 1.20 yuan for one person per day. When they arrived at the appointed place, the state would offer room and board. No allowance was offered. The places where the river laborers were housed was with local farmers or in mat sheds. Each

time the work lasted about one and a half months. Because of food shortages, some people liked to do this work. They could save three meals each day. But each time when the river laborers came back to the village, they gave vivid descriptions of extremely heavy physical work. It made some people afraid of trying. Usually, the Team Committee sent young men in turn.

Besides this long-term project, there were other temporary projects organized by the county or the commune. Most projects were conducted in farm slack seasons. All the recruited laborers were paid similarly. The team's share of the pay for these laborers was larger than the state's portion. The same thing was true for conscription. Some teams gave workpoints to the family which had a son in the army, but not individual portions.

As a matter of fact, this kind of payment was not invented by the Communist Party. We can trace this method to ancient China. In all dynasties before the Communist Party, peasants had to pay taxes in the form of civil service and military service in addition to the grain tax. The service taxes took various forms in various dynasties. Under the commune system, the service taxes--though it was not called so--fell on collectives instead of individuals.

Chapter 9

CLASSES

"Class struggle" was one of the basic theories of the CPC. One's class status and class origin were decisive to one's future. A landlord's son definitely had no chance to go to college. He even had less chance to get married.

In the countryside, people's class status was not so various as that of people in cities. They were classified as good, middle, and bad elements. Good elements included tenant, poor peasant, lower middle peasant. Middle elements included middle peasant, upper middle peasant, and little land leaser. Bad elements included landlord, rich peasant, counterrevolutionary, and evil element. Friedman, Pickowicz and Selden's book, Chinese Village, Socialist State gave the number and percentage of these people in a village. Landlords were 0.5%, rich peasants 0.7%, middle peasants 39.7%, and poor peasants 58.9%. A similar ratio existed across the country. The following were people's elements in the Third Team according to households.

<u>Elements</u>	<u>Number of Households</u>
Tenants	1
Poor Peasants	18
Lower Middle Peasants	2
Middle Peasants	13
Upper Middle Peasants	1
Little Land Leaser	0
Rich Peasants	0
Landlords	2
Counterrevolutionaries	0
Evil Elements	0

People's class status, except counterrevolutionaries and evil elements, had been determined by the amount of land they owned at the time of the Land Reform around 1949. Counterrevolutionaries were determined according to their political attitude toward the CPC before 1949 as well as toward political movements after 1949. Evil elements were determined by their moral actions. Classification based on the amount of land in 1949 seems not fully reasonable. In private talks, I learned that a person who had inherited quite a large amount of land from his father sold it just before the Communists came. Many villagers said he was wastrel. However, to his good fortune, he was classified as a poor peasant during the Land Reform. Villagers looked down upon this kind of people. The villagers also told me that when the Communist cadres came to the village, they chose the poorest people, absorbed them into the Party, and put them in the leadership. In Nanwu, Sun Dianchen (he was in the Third Team during the commune period) had been chosen and made to be the secretary of the Party Branch. However, later on, he was found to be corrupt. His new-built house

was confiscated and used for the Brigade headquarters (see the map in Appendix A). When I worked with Sun Dianchen, I was surprised to find that he was ignorant of the rules for sharing the work.

The only right of bad elements was to work in their team. They were assigned heavy and dirty jobs. The two landlords in the Third Team, Zhao Defeng and Sun Guangqian, were given the job to collect night soil, dry it, and store it for use. They did not need to go to the gathering place each day, because their job never changed. Nobody supervised them, because they did not dare to loaf on the job. Sometimes, they worked without pay. For example, when a heavy rain damaged a road, no team was responsible for mending it. The brigade would then gather all bad elements in five teams of about a dozen to mend it. The way of gathering them was by the wired broadcast network. They were ordered to bring tools and to go to a place at a time. In the summer, they might be gathered 2 to 4 times a month for similar purposes. People consciously kept away from them. Nobody visited their houses, or even put a single foot into their yards. The bad elements also never visited other people. If they needed to go to other villages, they must ask for a leave and report when they came back. The propaganda words, "class status", "class struggle", "class consciousness" and so on impressed people deeply. But I did not feel people's general hatred towards "class enemies," just like C. K. Yang observed that

"there was no mass resentment against the rich in general"¹⁸ before Communist rule.

The wives and children of the bad elements were also discriminated against in being assigned jobs, but not so seriously. When the Team Committee assigned good jobs to each family, bad elements' families were excluded. None of them were chosen to work in the Orchard Team. All of them were left in the team to do farm work, because farm work required more physical energy. In assigning daily work in the team, they were not discriminated against. In this point they were better treated than their husbands or fathers. The children of bad elements were excluded from "glorious things", such as from the Communist Youth League, the Communist Party, the army and the local militia. They could not get positions in commune or brigade level offices, and could not be chosen to work in state-run enterprises. Furthermore, they could not go to any educational institute higher than middle school. Economically, the bad elements and their dependents could get equal pay, so their living standard was the same as others.

One not only could not change one's status, but also passed the status to one's children. China is a patrilineal society, so people's status passed through the patrilineal line. For this reason, few girls wanted to marry sons of bad elements, even those from families of bad elements.

Daughters of bad elements also had some trouble in marriage, but not so much as their brothers.

Since people's status was determined in the Land Reform, the CPC rechecked them several times. With each "Recheck Movement", more and more "net-escaped landlords," "declined landlords," and "runaway landlords" were found. My granduncle, Zhong Binghe had a very sad story in the series of Recheck Movements. Zhong was my father's stepmother's brother and lived in Xinfang Village in the suburb of Xian. My step-grandmother's parents did not have a son. In order to extend the family's line, they adopted Zhong as their son. Zhong did almost all his family's farm work in his youth and he was a good driver of horse-drawn carts. In the Land Reform in 1949, his family was determined as a little land leaser. In the Recheck Movement in 1963 he was "elevated" to a landlord. During the Collectivization, the CPC's policy was that good elements and middle elements could get compensation for their land, horses and carts which were integrated into the collective, but landlords' properties were confiscated. Zhong received compensation during the Collectivization. When he was "elevated" to a landlord, he was suddenly in debt because he must return his received compensation back to his team. His wife and only daughter died of disease. This poor man worked alone to pay debts. Because of the low value of workpoints, it took him 15 years to pay back his debts. In 1978, he paid back all

debts to the collective. In 1979, one year after Mao died, he was re-classified as a little land leaser again in the last recheck movement. His paid debts to the collective in the past 15 years became credits over night. But before he could receive any penny from his team, he died. His team bought a wooden coffin for him with his credits. Then everything was done. The hard life had shortened his life-span.

People began to suspect the theory of "class struggle" in early 1980s and began to sympathize with bad elements and their dependents. Quite a few articles in newspapers reported that many landlords' sons got married. Because, for a long time, landlords' sons were excluded from any "glorious thing," and could only do farm work, so most of them became farming experts.

Chapter 10

TAXES

Most of the taxes called "gongliang" in the form of agricultural products were imposed on the team. My team turned over *gongliang* twice a year; in the summer, the team turned over an amount of wheat, and in the autumn, turned over an amount of corn and dried sweet potato chips to the commune. In different areas the state collected different products as *gongliang*. My team also grew about a dozen other crops, but no taxes were assessed on these crops. The amount of *gongliang* varied from 7% to 20% of total grain production. The percentage of *gongliang* was related to the food ratio as was discussed above. *Gongliang* must be paid in the best condition. The team was responsible for shipping *gongliang* to the Commune Grain Storage Station.

Taxes paying in kind is a very old custom in China. We can trace it back to at least 2,500 years ago. Every dynasty before the Communist regime applied this system of tax collection. The Grand Canal, the longest canal in the world, was built for the purpose of shipping grain tax thirteen

centuries ago. About four hundred years ago, in 1581, one prime minister in the Ming Dynasty, Zhang Juzheng, pushed forward a famous reform which was called "One Whip Statute." According to this statute, the tax form was changed from concrete materials to currency. "One Whip Statute" has been viewed as the seed of capitalism in China by many historians. The old taxing system, however, changed little in the countryside. The Communists inherited many old things from their predecessors. The tax in kind was one of these.

Gongliang comprised more than 95% of the team's total tax. The other two taxes, the head tax and transition tax, were conditional. The head tax, which began in 1970, was imposed on the team or person who killed pigs or cattle. The rate of the head tax was 2 yuan per head. Cattle were only used as draft animals which could only be owned by the team communally, never by an individual. They could only be killed with permission from the commune authorities. Pigs were owned both by the team and by individuals and no special permission was necessary to butcher them. Ninety-nine percent of the head tax was imposed on pigs. Individual farmers seldom killed pigs for their own use, instead they sold them to the state in exchange for cash and grain coupons. So 95% of the head tax fell on the team. The team killed pigs twice a year, the Mid-autumn Festival and the Chinese Lunar New Year. Each time the team killed about a dozen pigs and distributed the meat among the team members.

A tax collector would come to the village to collect the head tax. Individual farmers and the team had no responsibility to inform the tax collector. But to the contrary, it is the tax collector who looked for teams and individuals who killed pigs. In most cases, the tax collector could not find out who the individuals were who had killed a pig. I never knew any villager who paid the head tax after killing a pig.

Transition tax was collected in local markets. For any transaction involving big animals, such as goats, pigs, cattle, horses, donkeys and mules, the seller and the buyer had to pay 5% each of the negotiated price. The goat's sellers and buyers were individuals. Pigs were tended by both individuals and collectives, so the sellers and the buyers could be either the individuals or the collectives. No individuals tended cattle, horses, donkeys and mules, so the sellers and buyers of these animals were collectives. No tax was imposed on other goods, such as chickens, rabbits, vegetables, fruit, and so on.

In the late 1960s, there was almost no tax on individuals. Tax was not a topic of daily conversation. People did not view the "river laborers" as a kind of tax. But the situation changed quickly. Since the middle 1970s, many kinds of taxes were introduced. Most of these were local and unreasonable.

Chapter 11

SIDELINE ECONOMY

In Mao's era, the CPC enforced the policy of "Grain as the key link in agriculture." The sideline economy was restricted for both collectives and individuals. Some brigades and teams in cities' suburbs had small industries. In places far away from cities, there was almost no industry. Anyone who tried to develop a sideline economy was taking the risk of being criticized as "going the capitalist road." Many things were classified as "capitalist tails." There was no industry in any village of the Jiuzhou Commune. A couple of teams ran an oil processing workshop, cotton processing workshop, and tofu-making workshop. These workshops were operated by manual labor and animal power. The Third Team had a tofu-making workshop. There was no equipment driven by electricity in this workshop. A donkey was used to turn a stone mill. All the other things were done by a man, or two men at a busy time. Each morning a tofu seller pushed tofu in a wheelbarrow to other villages

to sell. He shouted to inform people when he entered into a village. Only corn and soybean were accepted in exchange for tofu. Money was not accepted except with grain coupons. The reason was that tofu was made of grain. Under the state monopoly of purchasing and marketing of grain, money could not be changed for grain without grain coupons. The only profit of this tofu-making workshop was the remains from making tofu. The remains were good food for the team's pigs. On holidays, more tofu could be sold. Some of the remains would be distributed to team members as a kind of food substitute.

Pig tending could not be viewed as a full sideline, because the aim for tending pigs was not for sale, but for offering meat to the team members and providing manure for farming. Every team tended twenty to forty pigs. Pig manure was the major fertilizer for the intensive agriculture. You could see Mao's logical instruction, "More pigs, more manure, and more grain", printed on the walls in big characters in many places of the village. Farmers thought that manure could nourish land, so it was better than chemical fertilizer. In the 1960s, the supply of chemical fertilizer was limited and unstable. You could not count on chemical fertilizer to increase production. Tending pigs was encouraged by the state which allowed the team to set aside a certain amount of grain for pig-tending. In cities, pork

consumption amounted to more than 80% of the total meat consumption.

Family sidelines were even more restricted. Except pig-tending, nothing could be called the family sideline. Any idea and tentative action to make more money was viewed as a "capitalist thing." In the early 1960s, Zhao Guangqing, a landlord's son, in the Third Team hatched chickens and sold them in a local market. He made some money, of course, and some people followed. Fewer and fewer people were interested in the collective production. Some team members who were not involved in this sideline became dissatisfied. Zhao Guangqing was severely criticized and this sideline was prohibited. This case became well-known in the Jiuzhou Commune. It was often cited in meetings to warn people not to do similar things. In order to maintain the commune system, ideological pressures were necessary.

Pig-tending was the only "legal" sideline in my area. The government adopted some methods to stimulate pig-tending in 1970. In the Jiuzhou Commune, for the sale of one pig to the state, the seller could receive an amount of grain coupons equivalent to the pig's weight and a few cloth coupons. However, pig-tending was still not easy for farmers. Pigs were tended in uncovered pigsties in my area. In the long cold winter, pigs were hardly able to gain weight. Every farmer wanted to buy a baby pig in the spring and sell the grown-up pig in the autumn. The price of a baby pig became

so high that it made pig-tending less profitable. Another problem was the pig's food. Team's pigs were allotted some grain, but the family's pig shared the family's grain ration. Before selling the pig, the family did not know whether its pig was acceptable. Furthermore, the state reward of grain coupons was not enough. It was necessary for a family to have a boy to collect food substitutes for the pig everyday. Qiu Changchun's son tended a pig. He looked for human droppings everyday for his pig. In the Third Team, only about one-third of the families tended one pig each. Though some families were not able to tend pigs, pig-tending was still attractive to them. The pigsty was the place the dishwater with food remains went. Manure from the pigsty could be exchanged for workpoints with the team. The money from selling a pig (0.53 yuan for one *jin*, about 50 to 70 yuan a pig) could be a family's only cash income, if this family had fewer laborers. Every family raised 2 to 10 chickens. Chicken eggs were one of the few sources of animal protein in the farmers' diet. Some eggs were sold to the village shop in exchange for salt. Quite a few families planted tobacco in their yards for their own consumption. Few sold tobacco in the local market. Sideline income made up about 5% of a family's annual income.

Chapter 12

WELFARE

In the commune system, the team provided more welfare than the brigade and commune. The Jiuzhou Commune offered free middle school education. The Nanwu Brigade provided free primary school education and subsidized co-operative medicare.

Middle and primary school has been discussed already. In the countryside medical care was very inadequate. There were no college trained doctors in any village in the county. Sun Deqian was a trained doctor in my village who was dismissed from a town hospital for political reasons. He was banned from practicing his profession, but was forced to do labor in the Third Team. During the Cultural Revolution the barefoot doctor was highly praised by the propaganda. In 1969, there were two barefoot doctors in Nanwu village. One had been trained for one year in a county hospital, the other had never been trained at all. Like others who worked in the brigade level organizations, the two barefoot doctors accumulated workpoints in their teams. They provided minor

medical treatments which was free to the villagers. The brigade supplied simple medicines. If one had a disease that the barefoot doctor could not deal with, one had to go to county hospitals. Farmers could not afford the cost of such a visit. In 1970, Nanwu Brigade set up the co-operative medicare system. Each person had to pay one yuan a year to the system and the brigade subsidized the rest of the expenditure. Under this system, a villager could have free medical treatments in the village. If he had a severe disease, the brigade would cover the expenditure of a stay in the county hospital. Nanwu Brigade controlled the income from the orchard, so it could set aside funds for the co-operative medicare system. Its neighbor villages did not establish similar systems in 1970.

Delivering a baby was a special case. County hospitals were too far away from the village. Barefoot doctors were unable to give help in delivery. In my village, delivery was with assistance of a midwife. She was Zhao Guangxiang's wife in the Third Team. She had received no formal training. No job title was given to her, and she was not seen as one type of barefoot doctor. The co-operative medicare system did not cover her job. Like carpenters and bricklayers, she could get pay of 2 yuan each day and free meals from the people she helped. She often went to other villages to help deliver a baby. She did a good job. I did not hear of any mistake she made.

The team offered other public services. In spring, the team would bring clay from the fields to each family in order to recover the roofs of their houses. One room was given one cart of soil. A family could get more if they needed it. Anybody had the right to use his team's horse-drawn carts. If he bought or borrowed bricks, logs or coal from other places and needed to take them to his home, he could ask the team for the loan of a cart. The team also loaned its carts to take patients to hospital or send a bride to her bridegroom's village. The users did not have to pay the cart driver and his helper. The driver and his helper received workpoints from the team for their services. If a family were building a house, the team provided most of the labor. For this the laborers received workpoints from the team. But the family had to pay a salary and offer meals to carpenters and bricklayers who were hired from other villages, or only meals to carpenters and bricklayers who were from the family's own. For building one house, the team provided about 100 working days. The team also gave workpoints to the people who attended a team member's funeral ceremony.

Team members could borrow money from the team. The team was the only source for team members to get a loan. In the Third Team, the amount people could borrow ranged from 10 to 40 yuan and usually only once for one year. Better-off families could get a loan more easily. One time, Zhang

Dianqi's wife wanted to borrow 10 yuan from the team. Zhang had become paralysed several years earlier. His wife alone supported their two small children in this poorest family in my team. When the Team Leader, Qiu Changchun, asked Zhang's wife what the loan was for, she told him that she wanted to buy a manual hair clipper. Qiu persuaded her not to buy that, because the hair clipper was not a necessity. In lending money, the Team Committee was very careful. If Family A borrowed some money, Family B, C, and D would follow the suit. I was the cash accountant. One time, I had only one coin of one cent in my cash drawer for an entire month. Most money was lent out. Shan Rui, the tenant, told me that I could not spend this coin. I asked why. He said humorously: "Money should not be all used up."

Theoretically, "wubao" was the perfect system for old people who had no children and were too old to work. Literally, *wubao* means "five-guarantees." A *wubao* family could get living materials and service from the team, but not from the brigade and the commune. There were no *wubao* families in Nanwu village. One time, a childless old couple in the Third Team applied to be a *wubao* family. The Team Committee discussed this problem and thought that they had nephews in the Fourth Team, so they were not qualified to be a *wubao* family. Many team members said either their nephews or their nephews' team, the Fourth Team, should support this

old couple. It was taken for granted that young people should take care of their parents and childless uncles.

Any *wubao* family was a great burden to a team. As a matter of fact, the most important welfare was provided by families. Old parents usually lived with one of their sons. The other sons were also responsible to support their parents. The way to support their parents was unique under the commune system. The sons whose parents were not living with them gave a number of workpoints to the family of the son their parents were living with. The sons had to reach an agreement about the number of workpoints contributed. They explained their agreement to the team accountants. In each distribution, the accountants would transfer some workpoints from the sons' families where their parents were not living to the son's family where their parents were living. This method of supporting parents was common across the countryside. But in some cases, this method was not workable. The problem was that unlike money, workpoints were not valid beyond the team. For example, the old couple mentioned above could not receive any workpoints from their nephews in the Fourth Team. A similar thing concerned a married daughter who moved to another village and could not give her workpoints to her parents. If she came back to visit her parents, she would bring concrete gifts. As a woman, she had more responsibility to take care of her parents-in-law than her own parents.

Chapter 13

POLITICAL INDOCTRINATION

Political indoctrination was felt everywhere. It changed farmers' lives in many ways. Most farmers at the age of 40 and over were illiterate or semi-illiterate. The women's illiteracy rate was higher than the men's. Generally, farmers thought that what they were taught in political indoctrination was correct.

When you entered into a village, you could feel that the atmosphere was political. Mao's instructions and the CPC'S slogans were displayed in conspicuous places. Some of Mao's words called people to be thrifty and not to waste grain. As a matter of fact, it was not necessary. Farmers' lives could not be any more thrifty. People were often organized for political activities. For example, when a Party congress finished, a celebration meeting which might be called the "meeting of 10,000" would be held in the county town. The team would be assigned a number of people to attend the meeting and to journey to the county town by horse-drawn

carts. This kind of meeting was usually held in winter. In busy seasons, the county tried to avoid holding such a meeting. Similar meetings were also held at the commune level and brigade level. Anyone who was assigned to attend the meeting could get his daily workpoints from his team. On a rainy day, the team would organize some people to study the Party's policy. People would group in one team member's house to study. I was often assigned the work of reading the newspaper for the women's group. When a team leader was present, people were urged to speak in turn. But when he was not, some people would take out small spindles from their pockets to spin, and some people would chat with each other. Most illiterate women preferred working to giving a speech formally. People did not hate political study. They could rest without losing workpoints.

Political indoctrination covered many areas of people's lives. With the political indoctrination the "new ideas" and the "new things" replaced the old ones. Political indoctrination, used as a tool to break down old customs, was very effective. In the late 1960s, the county built a crematorium. The propaganda exhorted people to break with their old customs and replace burial with cremation. But many farmers still followed the old custom and buried their relatives in their lineage graveyard. In order to prevent farm land from shrinking, all unclaimed graveyards were destroyed before 1969. In 1970, the local government decided

to remove all graves and cremate the remains. Several meetings were held in Nanwu Brigade and the people concerned were persuaded, or maybe forced, to agree with the government decision. Within a month, all the graveyards were removed. There was no resistance to this action. Burial reform had been prepared for many years. The action adopted in 1970 completed this reform.

The theory of class struggle was one of the topics of indoctrination. People were warned to be vigilant against the sabotage by the class enemy. They were taught again and again that there were only class relations, no clan relations. The theory of class struggle damaged lineage unity. Traditionally, a person's name was made up of three characters. The first was the family or lineage name. The second was the generation name. The third was the given name. The generation name was very important to lineage unity. By reading the first two characters, you could know a person's lineage and his generation in the lineage. The people with the same generation name were brothers. Under the influence of class struggle, some people denied their relations with bad elements. A few people began to give their children other names in place of a generation name. If this trend continued, the generation order in the lineage would no longer be clear. Most people did not like this kind of "new thing." Another important means of maintaining the lineage unity was the ancestral hall where members of a

lineage met in a special hall to carry out the ceremonies honoring their lineage ancestors. This custom was discontinued in the 1950s. Because of these two changes, people estimated that the disintegration of the lineage was only a matter of time.

Models were often set up for some political purposes. In 1970, a woman in the Fourth Team was chosen as a grain-saving model. Her family owed grain and money to her team before 1969. In order to repay debts to the team, she invented several ways to utilize wild plants. In the countryside, almost all edible plants were part of the farmer's diet. But this woman used wild plants more extensively. Sometimes, she could not make them into edible food, but she did not give up and tried again and again. She let her children work in the team as soon as they were accepted, no matter how few workpoints they were given. The clothes of her family members were patched again and again until others thought it was impossible to patch them any more. Her family gave up its distribution of meat in the team, though its price was lower than market price. For three years, there was no meat at all in her family's diet. In 1969, her family repaid all debts of grain and money, and even received some money after the final accounting. She was sent to other villages to give speeches. This illiterate woman was talkative and humorous. Her story brought sympathy from the audience and gasps of admiration. At first, I did

not understand why she was chosen as a model, because everything she did was just for her family. The brigade cash accountant, Sun Jiapo, explained to me that what she did was more important to the collective. The major principle of socialism was not to let anybody go hungry. If a family suffered food shortage, it had the right to borrow grain from its team. If every family borrowed grain from the team, the team would collapse.

This is an example of a good model for living in the collective. For the people who damaged collective interests, another way was adopted. The tofu seller, Shan Chengfang, in the Third Team had a family of four. He was the only breadwinner to raise his two small sons. His wife had to stay at home to take care of children. In 1969, his family moved out of his father's house and built a house on the edge of the village. His house was one of the most shabby houses in the village. Because of this newly built house and his heavy family burden, he was in debt. He was very strong, but could not make even one more workpoint under the commune system. Because the value of his annual workpoints could not balance the cost of the distributed goods of his family of four, his debts to the team were growing. He began to steal grain from the team. Each time he put a little grain into a specially made pocket. The team leaders knew of his actions for quite a while before deciding to catch him. He was caught red-handed. Two meetings were held and the team

members were called to attend to "help" him improve his thought. In the meeting, of course, Mao's words were cited. He criticized himself for lower consciousness of class struggle, forgetting his class origin, forgetting bitterness in the past, being selfish and so on. Other people criticized him too and said similar things about him. The language people used in the meeting was the language of propaganda. People did not use the same language in private conversations. The Team Committee changed his job and let him do farm work in the team. It was a humiliation for him. The Team Committee members were angry about his behavior. But in private conversations, I heard quite a few sympathetic words about him. Everybody knew that his family was the second poorest family in the team.

Chapter 14

SOME CHANGES IN SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

The Commune changed people's behavior in many ways. Workpoints, as a measurement of contribution to collectives, like money, became the subject of people's pursuit. The appearance of workpoints distorted people's aim for working. During the individual farming period, a farmer's production activity directly aimed at a good harvest. His means equalled ends. But under the commune system, the workpoint--the linkage between work and income--became the first goal. The real beneficial result was lowered to the secondary consideration. When I was in Leiyang County, Hunan Province, there was a production team neighboring my residence. The team had a regulation that 5 *jin* of manure could be exchanged for 1 workpoint with the team. In order to make the collected manure heavier, people mixed soil into it before weighing for the exchange of workpoints. If one did this, one would benefit significantly from one's action. If everybody did the same thing within a team, nobody would

benefit from such an action. Needless to say, such work was non-productive.

People tried to save energy while working for collectives. Unlike working in an assembly line in a factory, there was not a fixed quota to evaluate economic effectiveness of each one's work. The same amount of workpoints did not mean the same amount of real contribution. I heard countless times that the quality of contemporary farm work would not have been accepted by anybody during the individual farming period, even if this work was free. I also heard countless times people's comments on their working attitudes. They admitted that they had different working attitudes towards themselves, the team, and the brigade respectively. A common phenomenon was that when a team leader was at the work site, people worked hard; when he wasn't, people tried to kill time. Under these conditions, cadres like "Old Pockmark" were much needed to support the collective. Old Pockmark was a brigade leader Richard W. Wilson described in his book, Moral Behavior in Chinese Society. Wilson describes him:

Old Pockmark lived an austere lifestyle. He lived in what was by village standards a rather small and run down house, and, in the early 1960s at least, ate a rather meager diet of rice and fermented beancurd. This poverty was not simply a show. He was genuinely poor. Even though as a leading cadre he received one of the highest workpoint totals of anyone in the village, he worked so hard at his job that he neglected his family's private plots-that in Chen Village could count for as much as 30 percent of most villagers' income.¹⁹

His leadership style, as we shall see, was characterized by a relentless desire to change and to

innovate. It was also marked by an almost rigid fairness.²⁰

But Old Pockmark acted toward the village like the authoritarian patriarch of a traditional family—not a warm loving father but a stern taskmaster.²¹

Not many of the villagers felt much liking for Old Pockmark, but most of them respected him, however grudgingly....he "treated the village like his big family." ...Old Pockmark was "working selflessly for the collective."²²

These characteristics made him not much loved, but widely respected in the village.²³

Persons like Old Pockmark could be found in Nanwu Brigade. Their nature was conducive to being promoted to leadership. Team leaders not only had the responsibilities of leading people to work, but also played a role as supervisors. People did not like their leaders or even cursed them behind their backs, but somehow they respected them and obeyed them. There were two main reasons in forming this kind of relation between leaders and masses. One was that team leaders contributed more to the collectives than the common people, but the team leaders did not receive more than others. The collective affairs occupied their time and energy, and it allowed them hardly time for their family affairs. People realized this. The other reason was that what they did and said was for the good of the collective on which people's interests were based. If a person who damaged collective interests quarreled with a team leader like Old Pockmark, this person could hardly count on help or get sympathy from other team members, although these team members had often cursed this team leader behind his back. If this team leader raged in a quarrel and threatened to resign, it might mean a crisis for the team. Unlike the

leaders above the commune level and somewhat at the brigade level, the team leaders were far from sought after positions.

Chapter 15

ELEVATION OF WOMEN'S STATUS

Traditionally, China's rural life was "men farming, women weaving." Men were breadwinners, and women were housewives. To serve their husbands and to raise children were "unalterable principles" for women. Their major housework was cooking, washing and taking care of children. Before 1911 all the women had to bind their feet when they reached 5 to 7 years old. This custom made women unable to do fieldwork. Their subordinate status was inevitable. Although the custom of feet-binding was abolished after 1911, women were still in a completely subordinate status in the countryside. Before the establishment of the commune, women occasionally went to the field to work.

The Commune System brought the improvement of women's status. Under the commune system, women were encouraged to do farm work. As a matter of fact, the incentive of workpoints drove most of them into the field. In my team, at least 70% of women worked in the team. The other 30% did

housework at home. In an extended family, only one woman was left at home to cook, to wash, to raise pigs and to take care of children. Any extended family tried to let as many people as possible work in the team, so the woman who was left at home was no less busy than the women who worked in the team. The woman in a nuclear family also tried to make as much time as possible to do team work. She might let her elder child take care of her younger children, while she would work in the team. She would cook food for her family after working in the team. Because quite a few men held long-term jobs or positions in and above brigade level organizations, it was quite common that the number of women who appeared in the gathering place was more than that of men. Women with little children could go home to nurse their children at breaks, once in the morning and once in the afternoon. Sometimes, they took a longer time and came back late, but nobody complained about that. In a family, women's roles were no less important than men's, if not more important. I often heard people say: "Women's lives are harder than men's." By hard working, women won themselves respect. Men began to change their attitude to women. Sympathy for women was the strongest feeling that prevailed in my area. When a woman was treated improperly by her husband, she would say: "My contribution to the family was no less than yours." Sometimes, she repeated the same sentence to others.

In the past in an extended family, none of the women ate with men at tables. They served food for men, including their mature sons, and ate leftovers with little children after men finished their meals. When I was in the village, most families changed this custom. They ate together, or men and women who worked in the team ate first, women who stayed at home and children ate afterwards. In the past, men were usually given a special dish because of hard field work. Now the family either did not cook such a dish, or gave such a dish to all breadwinners, including men and women. But when the family had guests, people still followed the old custom. Men and guests ate first, women and children ate afterwards. Because women became breadwinners, they could bring more goods when they came home to visit their parents. The bride price was going up when I was in the village.

We can not say that women gained equal status with men. In the Commune Middle School, female students were fewer than male students. Women had fewer chances to work in commune or brigade level offices. They also had fewer chances to be selected to work in a state-run factory. In a family, usually men invited guests. Women seldom did so. If a man was invited, his wife was always ignored. A new-born boy was still more welcome than a new-born girl.

Since the Qing Dynasty was toppled in 1911, men and women became equal in law. But women's status did not change much in the countryside. The commune system greatly improved

women's status by forcing them into the fields to work.
Women, especially young women, liked this improvement.

Chapter 16

FARMERS' OPINIONS ON THE COMMUNE SYSTEM

In 1969 and 1970, the commune system worked well. This was its most consolidated period. Of course, its operation was accompanied by ideological control. Farmers had their own opinions on the commune system. Their opinions were based on their values, not on those of economists.

On the most important question of the living standard, no farmer gave a definite answer. In my two years in Nanwu, I did not hear anybody say that his life was improved under the commune system in private conversation. I also did not hear anybody say that his life was deteriorating, except the mentioning of the Great Famine from 1960 to 1962. China has been an agricultural society for more than 3,000 years. During these 3,000 years peasants' lives did not change much. They never used the word "living standard" to compare their lives now and then. The communist propaganda also did not use this word at that time.

In political studies and on public occasions, everybody claimed that his contemporary life was much better than that

in the past. Without exception, people described their lives in the past with the propaganda phrase "bran and vegetables made up a half of their year's food." This phrase could not stand scrutiny. Poor peasants comprised a half of the population in the countryside. If they lived in that way and ate all of the bran instead of using it for animals, the cereal grain in the past must have contained at least 25% bran. As a matter of fact, the major crops, wheat and corn, only contain 5-7% bran. Under the ideological control, any praise of the past and any criticism of the present would be viewed as the "lower class consciousness."

Farmers' opinions on the commune could only be assumed from private conversations. When team leaders made a wrong decision which led to a reduction of output, or when people did not receive the amount of goods they wished in distribution, people would compare certain things with those in the individual farming period. The middle peasant, Zhao Yongyuan, complained that the total peanut output of the team was no more than his family's in the past. The middle peasant, Zhao Guangyou's father, said his pig was growing too slowly because of bad food. In the past, he fed his pigs with soybeans. The middle peasant, Shan Qiang, told me that once a year, he did not grow wheat. In the summer of that year, he worked 19 days as a hired laborer to harvest wheat. For one day's work, he received 15 jin of wheat. The total amount of wheat was more than that his family of four

received now. The only former tenant farmer in the team, Shan Rui, was proud of his farming technique and his physical strength. Formerly he had worked for a landlord in a neighboring village. Because he was the head of the tenant group, his income had been twice as much as that of others. He had been allowed to bring his wife to that village and he had often eaten with the landlord at the same table. In 1969, there was a reduction in the best land of the team, because a wrong decision was made by leaders. The middle peasant, Sun Deyi, told me that a family had only owned 3 *mu* in the area to the north during the individual farming period, however, this family had lived well because of the fertility of the land. Many people said that they had used boiled soybeans for fertilizer before, but now no team did so, because of grain control by the state. Many people recalled that they had a good cash income by selling fruit during the individual farming period. These fragmentary comparisons can not lead us to a conclusion. I never heard landlords talking about the past. I also never heard any poor peasant talking about his miserable life in the past as the propaganda said. My impression is that farmers' material life remained unchanged in general in my area. The most important index for the standard of living was still the amount of grain per capita. If farmers had more grain, they would have more protein by raising animals. However, the amount of grain per capita did not increase. Figures which

were revealed after Mao's era gave people the real picture. "Even in 1975 it (agricultural production) was not yet sufficient to feed the population, and the per capita food grain output was still 12.1 percent less than the annual average from 1931 to 1937."²⁴ In Guangdong Province, the amount of grain per capita fluctuated in a range of 574 to 707 *jin* from 1954 to 1974.²⁵ In Nanwu, farmers admitted that the yield per *mu* increased a lot compared to that in the individual farming period, but the increased yield was balanced by the increased population. The major reasons that farmers gave for the increased yields were the refined seeds offered by the state, rational close planting, wide use of chemical fertilizer, and an improved irrigation system.

For farmers, the biggest change the commune system brought was the farming organization. Under the commune system, people worked in groups. They talked to each other while working. It made farm work less boring. Men often talked about raising pigs, goats, and their gardening. A man would tell others that it was a good idea to raise a goat for milk for pigs. Women often talked about housework, clothing, cooking, and taking care of children. After receiving tofu remains, they would talk about how to make them into a good food. People also exchanged information on these occasions, for example, the reward method of selling pigs to the state, the different prices of tobacco leaves in two markets and so on. Some farmers were also satisfied that they did not have

to worry about many things, such as farming tools, farming seasons, weather and so on. What they did was just what they were told. The farm work was not so hard as it had been in the past. Farmers liked these changes.

People often complained about something, but not about the commune system. In the Third Team, people complained that leaders did not know much about agricultural production, that leaders made stupid decisions, that leaders could have a day off from farm work for a meeting, and so on. In my two years in Nanwu, I did not know anybody who highly praised the commune system, nor anybody who belittled it in private conversations. The attitude toward the commune system was generally neutral.

Chapter 17

PROBLEMS CAUSED BY THE COMMUNE SYSTEM

In the chapters above some problems caused by the commune were noted. In this chapter I will briefly review two major problems caused by the commune system: economic sluggishness and rapid population growth as well as other problems.

Economic sluggishness was obvious in the commune system. There was no expanded production. Mao's decision to tie 700 million farmers to the land and to forbid them to run factories was a huge mistake. China's problem is easy to see. Long before Communists came to power, R. H. Tawney pointed out, "the fundamental fact, it is urged, is of a terrible simplicity. It is that the population of China is too large to be supported by existing resources."²⁶ Fei Hsiao-tung thought that the only way to improve the countryside was to develop industry.²⁷ Certainly the yield per unit area increased during the commune period, because of more manpower, more chemical fertilizer, and the application of agricultural science and technology. But this

kind of increase could not be sustained. The circulation of commodities was tightly controlled by the government. The exchange of commodities among individuals and teams was almost zero. As far as I know, there was only one exchange between teams in Nanwu in the few years before 1970. The Third Team traded an ox for a donkey with the First Team. Farmer's buying power was only about 15 yuan per capita annually. That was barely enough to buy salt and cloth from state-run stores. Apparently, the commune system was one of the most restrictive economic systems of modern times.

It is widely believed that Mao made a lot of mistakes in ruling China. It is also believed that the biggest mistake concerned population policy. Unlike the economic problems, the population explosion cannot be solved. It is the Commune System which stimulated population growth.

The distribution system, as was discussed before, was very unreasonable. A new-born child could get a portion of grain more than he\she could consume. In a team which was allowed the ration of 400 *jin* of grain, a new-born child could receive 280 *jin* of grain according to the principle of 7 : 3. A strong male laborer who worked 350 days a year would receive the head portion of 280 *jin* and workpoint portion in a range of 280-300 *jin*. The total amount of grain of a strong man was only double that of a new-born child. But his consumption could be more than ten times as great as a child's. The universal phenomenon in the countryside was

that a family with more laborers and fewer small children would receive more money from its team at the end of year, but they often had not enough grain for consumption.

Meanwhile, a family with fewer laborers and more small children would receive less money or even owed some to the team, but they had enough food. Ironically, under the semi-hungry conditions, farmers needed children to balance their grain shortage. I knew that a few people even managed to have a baby at a specific time. If a baby was born in December, he would be counted for that year's distribution.

In a team the land belonged to the collective. Each newborn child would naturally become one of the land owners, and so he or she had the full right to share food. In this sense, children were largely borne by the team rather than by their family. When the children were grown up enough and their family would again not have enough food, their parents would urge them to marry and to have children as soon as possible. A vicious cycle was formed. China had 700 million farmers during the commune period, most families tried to have more children, thus the population explosion took shape.

The above two problems could be borne by the whole nation to a certain degree. As long as Mao could save his political face, he would insist on the commune system regardless of the nation's interests. What he did was as a Chinese proverb has it, "drink poison to quench thirst."

The commune system also caused other problems. One was corruption, another "pingdiao" (laborers were shifted without payment), and then the great increase of non-production personnel, i.e., all those not actively involved in agriculture. These problems were the ones the farmers disliked most and were severely criticized by the reformers in the post-Mao era and were made the excuse to cancel the commune system. Corruption, "pingdiao", and increase of non-production personnel were the results of flaws in the commune system. From the very beginning, the commune leadership was given too much power. Their authority over the brigade, team, and individual was overwhelming and entirely without checks and controls. Its operation was largely dependent on people's, particularly cadres' "consciousness" indoctrinated by the CPC. When the ideological control was effective and the majority still believed communist theories, the system worked well enough. But when people came to doubt the validity of communist theories and began to pursue their individual interests, many problems became evident. The commune's coordinating functions of manpower led to the abuse of individual rights. Commune leaders could assign labor quotas to teams as often as they wished. The commune would often arbitrarily demand, without warning, additional labor and materials from the teams under it. Some cadres even used the team's manpower and materials to build their own houses. Many people tried

escape farm work by getting a position in the expanding commune level administration, thus the non-production personnel at the commune level kept on increasing. In my team, at least 20% of the annual workpoints were gained by activities outside of the team's agricultural production. This percentage kept growing. All these people accumulated workpoints in their teams. Men leaving farm work, but still receiving food and money from the team. The outflow of manpower devaluated workpoints year by year. In the Third Team the value of 10 workpoints devalued from 0.72 yuan in 1969 to 0.41 yuan in 1973. I knew a team where a full grown man's daily work was only worth 0.08 yuan. Workpoints were no longer able to stimulate people to work. In two provinces, the provincial leaders were bold enough to break teams into much smaller groups, and introduced the "system of production responsibility". The official termination of the commune system for the country as a whole did not come about until Mao's death.

CONCLUSION

This is a study of a no longer existing social institution. I aimed at giving the social and economic substructures of the commune system as well as presenting the problems the commune caused. Apparently, this great social experiment ended in failure. The conclusion will describe the major changes in farmers' lives from the Mao's era to the present.

In 1978, two years after Mao's death, the commune system was denounced by the government. The team's land and other properties were distributed among the farmers. If the farmers wanted to continue as a team, they could. All the poor teams disincorporated in 1979 and those which were comparatively better-off waited until 1980. The names commune, production brigade and production team disappeared from the official language and the old name for the village was resumed. Households became the basic production units, but farmers could not rent or lease their land. Collectives, were called villages, continued to function. Farmers paid taxes to the collective and then the collective paid taxes to the state. After paying increased taxes, some of them in

kind, farmers can control the rest of their production. People can bid for renting indivisible properties such as ponds, small area of un-cultivable land, wet lands along rivers and so on. Now farmers are encouraged to run factories, either individually or jointly. They are allowed to work for somebody else and as a result, some rural labor flocked to cities. Less and less labor remained to work the land, but even so, farmers' productivity increased. As a whole, farmers' income from non-agricultural activities has increased. Most bad elements were reclassified and announced that they had become "new people" during the long period of "socialist reform." Many cadres on the commune and brigade level lost their authority. They have to work like ordinary people. In the post-Mao era farmers have been given much more freedom to handle their affairs.

The cancel of the commune system also caused problems. Large pieces of land were cut small. In order to be fair, each family was given several pieces of land, some from good and some from bad. The large tractors which had been owned by the commune and helped turning soil once a year were not able to work on these small pieces of land. So they were discarded. Farmers depended more on traditional farming, i.e., using animal power or even manpower to break soil. Some land was cut so small that a farmer had to move around his heavy tools from one piece after another for his work in one morning. Animal power was insufficient too. In the first

two years after the land was distributed, these problems were the major ones farmers faced.

The Communist Party abandoned the policy of equaling farmers' living standard and allowed some people to become rich earlier than others. Farmers have been encouraged to find any means to become rich. In some places the surplus labor found outlets and engaged in non-agricultural businesses, but in other places farmers had nothing to do in winters but stayed at home. Farmers' income became very different from place to place. Even two neighboring villages could be very different. For farmers as a whole, however, their material well-being has improved, at least in terms of enough food.

The commune system was practiced in China for twenty-one years. It ended up being a real tragedy for China.

NOTES

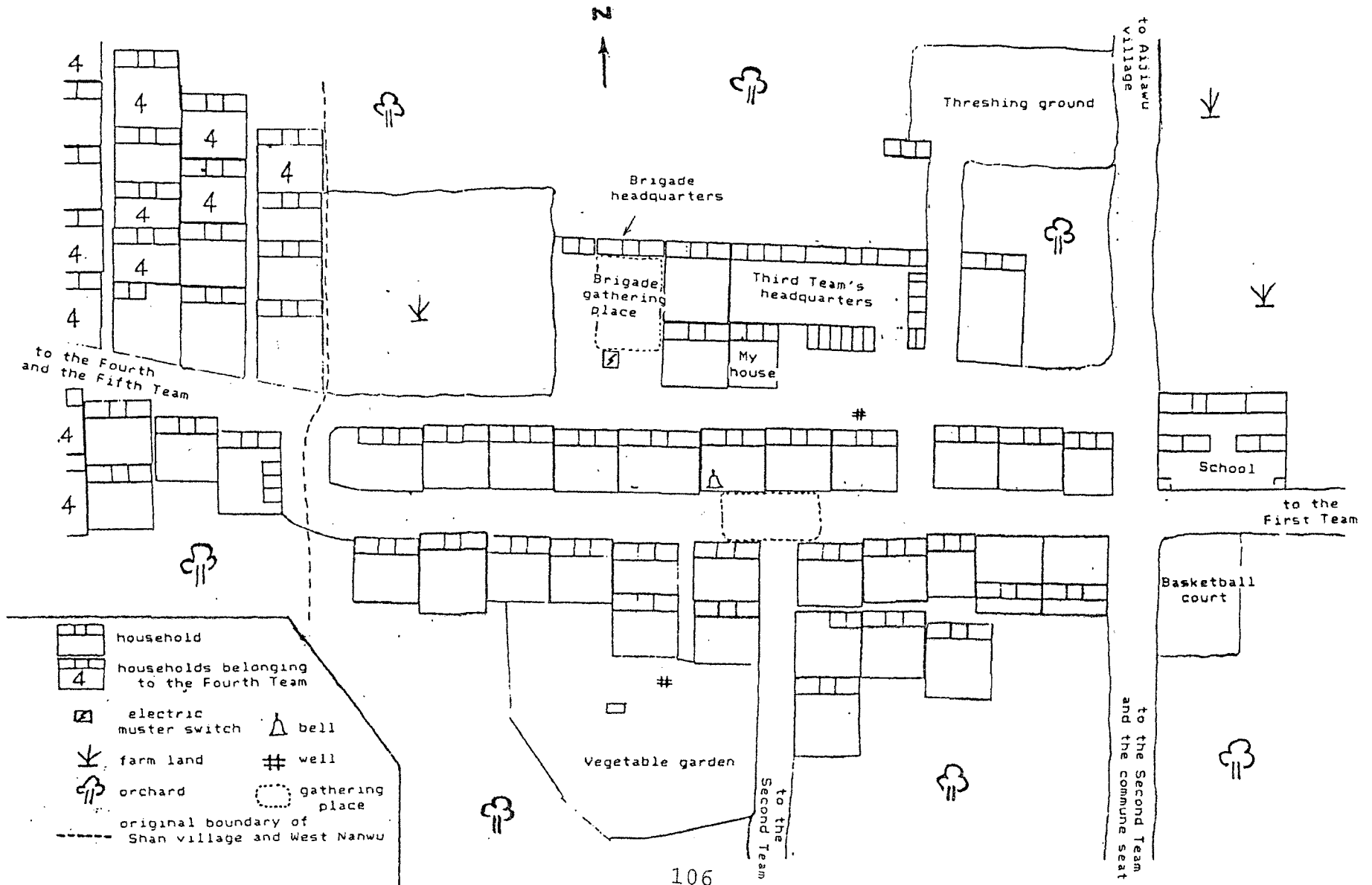
- 1 Alan P.L. Liu, How China is Ruled (Santa Barbara: University of California, 1986), p. 126-127.
- 2 Edward Friedman and others, Chinese Village, Socialist State (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 188.
- 3 Ibid., p. 188.
- 4 Communist Party Committee of Qiliying People's Commune, "Good People's Commune," People's Daily (September 18, 1977).
- 5 Quan Yanchi, Mao Walking Down the Sacred Temple (Beijing: China-Foreign Culture Publishing House, 1989), p. 52-53.
- 6 Charles Price. Ridley (trans.), Rural People's Communes in Lien-chiang, ed. by C. S. Chen, (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1969), p. 5.
- 7 Jurgen Domes, The Government and Politics of the PRC: A Time of Transition (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1985), p. 45-46.
- 8 Edward Friedman and others, Chinese Village, Socialist State (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 239.
- 9 Alan P.L. Liu, How China is Ruled (Santa Barbara: University of California, 1986), p. 45.
- 10 Ibid., p. 128.
- 11 Immanuel Chung-yueh. Hsu, Readings in Modern Chinese History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 601.

- 12 William L. Parish and Martin King Whyte, Village and Family in Contemporary China (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1978), p. 36.
- 13 Jurgen Domes, The Government and Politics of the PRC: A Time of Transition (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1985), p. 45.
- 14 Fei Hiao-tung and Chang Chih-i, Earthbound China (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945), p. 55.
- 15 Ibid., p. 41.
- 16 William L. Parish and Martin King Whyte, Village and Family in Contemporary China (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 60.
- 17 Martin C. Yang, A Chinese Village, Taitou, Shantung Province (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), p. 32.
- 18 Ch'ing-K'un Yang, A Chinese Village in Early Communist Transition (Cambridge, MA: The Technology Press, 1959) p. 121.
- 19 Richard P. Madsen Moral Behavior in Chinese Society, ed. Richard W. Wilson and others (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1981), p. 157.
- 20 Ibid., p. 157.
- 21 Ibid., p. 158.
- 22 Ibid., p. 158.
- 23 Ibid., p. 157.
- 24 Jurgen Domes, The Government and Politics of the PRC: A Time of Transition (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1985), p. 38.
- 25 William L. Parish and Martin King Whyte, Village and Family in Contemporary China (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 122.
- 26 R. H. Tawney, Land and Labor in China (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1932), p103.

27 Fei Hiao-tung and Chang Chih-i, Earthbound China
(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945), p. 18.

APPENDIX A

Map of the Neighborhood of the Third Production Team of Nanwu Brigade (1969)



APPENDIX B

Glossary

- barefoot doctor(赤脚医生): Para-medic.
- big rice pot(大锅饭): System of equal distribution.
- brigade(大队): Short term for production brigade. Brigade is at the second level between commune and team. Usually coterminous with the village.
- capitalist tail(资本主义尾巴): Remnant of capitalism in Chinese socialist society.
- gongliang(公粮): Grain tax.
- gongshe(公社): Commune. Short term for People's Commune, generally equivalent to township.
- guangdan(光蛋): Pauper.
- jin(斤): Chinese weight measurement. One jin is equal to 0.5 kilograms or approximately equal to 1.1 pound.
- kang(炕): Farmer's bed made of sun-dried bricks. It is heated by the flue from the cook stove. It is common in North China.
- mu(亩): Chinese measurement for farming land. One mu is equal to 0.0667 hectares or 0.1647 acres.
- pingdiao(平调): Labor and material transferred by executive orders from one unit to another without payment.
- renmindashe(人民公社): Another form of communal organization.

team(小队): Short term for production team. Team is the smallest cooperative work unit.

workpoint(工分): Unit value calculated on amount of work done.

wubao(五保): Five guarantees. The collective offered goods and services to the people who have no children and are too old to work.

ziliudi(自留地): Private plot. Under the commune system all the farmers born before the Land Reform, around 1950, were allowed to maintain a small piece of land for their own use.

ziliuliang(自留粮): An amount of grain from ziliudi which was taken away by the collective.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Baker, Hugh D. A Chinese Lineage Village, Sheung Shui. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968.
- Barker, Randolph and others (ed.). The Chinese Agricultural Economy. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1982.
- Barnett, A. Doak (ed.). Chinese Communist Politics in Action. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969.
- Bernstein, Thomas. P. Up to the Mountains and Down to the Villages: The Transfer of Youth From Urban to Rural China. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977.
- Chan, Anita and others. Chen Village: The Recent History of a Peasant Community in Mao's China. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.
- Chen, C.S. Rural People's Communes in Lien-chiang Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1969.
- Chu, Godwin C. (ed.). Moving A Mountain. Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1979.
- Crook, Isabel. and Crook, David. Revolution in a Chinese Village Ten Mile Inn. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1959.
- Domes, Jurgen. The Government and Politics of the PRC: A Time of Transition. Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1985.
- Donnithorna, Audrey. China's Economic System, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1967.
- Eckstein, Alexander. and others (ed.). Economic Trends in Communist China. Chicago: Aldine, 1968.
- Fei, Hiao-tung and Chang, Chih-i. Earthbound China. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945.

- Freedman, Maurice. Chinese Lineage and Society: Fukien and Kwangtung. London: Athlone Press., 1966.
- _____. Lineage Organization in Southeastern China. London: Athlone Press, 1958.
- Friedman, Edward., and others. Chinese Village, Socialist State. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991.
- Galbraith, John Kenneth. A China Passage. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1973.
- Gamble, Sidney. North China Villages Berkeley: University of Calif. Press, 1963.
- _____. Ting Hsien: A Northern China Rural Community. New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1954.
- Geddes, W. R. Peasant Life in Communist China, Ithaca: Society for Applied Anthropology, 1963.
- Hinton, William. Fanshen: A Documentary of Revolution in A Chinese Village. New York: Random House, 1966.
- Hsiao, Kung-chuan. Rural China. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1960.
- Hsu, Immanuel Chung-yueh. Readings in Modern Chinese History. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Johnson, Chalmers A. Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power: The Emergence of Revolutionary China 1937-1945. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962.
- Kulp, Daniel H. Country Life in South China. New York: Columbia University, 1925.
- Lang, Olga. Chinese Family and Society. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946.
- Lardy, Nicholas R. Agriculture in China's Modern Economic Development. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983
- Lewis, John W. Leadership in Communist China. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963.
- Lin, Gang. "China's Agricultural Backwardness Is the Root Cause of its Rapid Population Growth," Population Research, XXII, 1, 1981.

- Liu, Alan P.L. How China is Ruled. Santa Barbara: University of California, 1986.
- Macciocchi, Maria Antonietta. Daily Life in Revolutionary China. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972.
- Migdal, Joel S. Peasants, Politics, and Revolution: Pressure Toward Political and Social Change in the Third World. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974.
- Milton, David. and Milton, Nancy. People's China 1966 through 1972. New York: Random House, 1974.
- Mosher, Steven. Broken Earth: The Rural Chinese. New York: The Free Press, 1983.
- _____. Journey to the Forbidden China, New York: The Free Press, 1985.
- Myrdal, Jan. Report From a Chinese Village. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1965.
- Parish, William L. "Egalitarianism in Chinese Society," Problems of Communism. Jan.-Feb., 1981.
- _____. "Socialism and the Chinese Peasant Family", Journal of Asian Studies. XXXIV, 1975.
- _____. and Whyte, Martin King. Chinese Rural Development: The Great Transformation. New York: M. E. Sharpe Inc, 1985.
- _____. and _____. Village and Family in Contemporary China. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.
- Popkin, Sael L. The Rational Peasant. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979.
- Potter, Jack M. Capitalism and the Chinese Peasant. Berkeley: University of Calif. Press, 1968.
- Quan, Yanchi. Mao Walking Down the Sacred Temple. Beijing: China-Foreign Culture Publishing House, 1989.
- Ridley, Charles Price (trans.) Rural People's Communes in Lien-chiang. ed. by C. S. Chen, Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1969.
- Schram, Stuart (ed.). Authority, Participation and Cultural Change in China. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973.

- Schran, Peter. The Development of Chinese Agriculture, 1950-1959. Urban: University of Illinois Press, 1969.
- Schultz, Theodore. Transforming Traditional Agriculture. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964.
- Schurmann, Herbert F. Ideology and Organization in Communist China. Berkeley: University of Calif. Press, 1966.
- Scott, James C. The Moral Economy of the Peasant. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976.
- Selden, Mark. The Yen-an Way in Revolutionary China. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971.
- Shue, Vivienne. Peasant China in Transition: The Dynamics of Development Experience in Comparative Perspective. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980.
- Skinner, G. William. "Marketing and Social Structure in Rural China," Journal of Asian Studies, 24(1)-24(3), 1964.
- _____. "Chinese Peasants and the Closed Community: An Open and Shut Case," Comparative Studies in Society and History. XIII, 1971.
- Smith, Arthur H. Village Life in China, Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1909.
- Stavis, Benedict. People's Commune and Rural Development in China. Ithaca: Rural Development Committee, Cornell University, 1977.
- _____. Making Green Revolution. Ithaca: Rural Development Committee, Cornell University, 1974.
- Tang, Tsou. "Organization, Growth and Equality in Xiyang County," Modern China. April 1979.
- Tawney, R. H. Land And Labor in China. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1932.
- Thaxton, Ralph. China Turned Rightside Up: Revolutionary Legitimacy in the Peasant World. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983.
- Trager, Frank N., and Henderson, William. Communist China, 1949-1969: A Twenty-Year Appraisal. New York: New York University Press, 1970.

- Vogel, Ezra. Canton Under Communism. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969.
- _____. Cadres, Bureaucracy and Political Power in Communist China. New York: Columbia University Press, 1967.
- Walker, Kenneth. Planning in Chinese Agriculture. Chicago: Aldine, 1977.
- Wilson, Richard W. and others (ed.). Moral Behavior in Chinese Society. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1981.
- Wolf, Margery. The House of Lim. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968.
- _____. Women in Chinese Society. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975.
- Yang, Ch'ing-K'un. The Chinese Family in the Communist Revolution. Cambridge: The Technology Press, 1959.
- _____. A Chinese Village in Early Communist Transition. Cambridge: The Technology Press, 1959.
- Yang, Martin C. A Chinese Village, Taitou, Shantung Province. New York: Columbia University Press, 1945.
- Zhu, Jingzhi. China's Grain Policy and the Work to Supply Grain to Cities and Towns. Beijing: Finance and Economics Publishing House, 1958.
- Zweig, David. "Opposition to Change in Rural China: The System of Responsibility and People's Communes," Asian Survey. July 1983.