# Agriculture 3

IN this area, as in all other parts of the country, the cultivated land has for long been elaborately partitioned into very small fragments. A farmer, or a family, does not own one but a number of plots, and these are generally scattered in a number of localities. Homes are not on the cultivated land but are in the village. To get to his farm a farmer has to go to several different places, some of them quite distant. Each field belongs to a different owner and each owner must have some way of reaching his field, so there are numerous roads or paths crossing the land. In the summer, or during the growing seasons, the land resembles many small strips of different colors lying side by side.

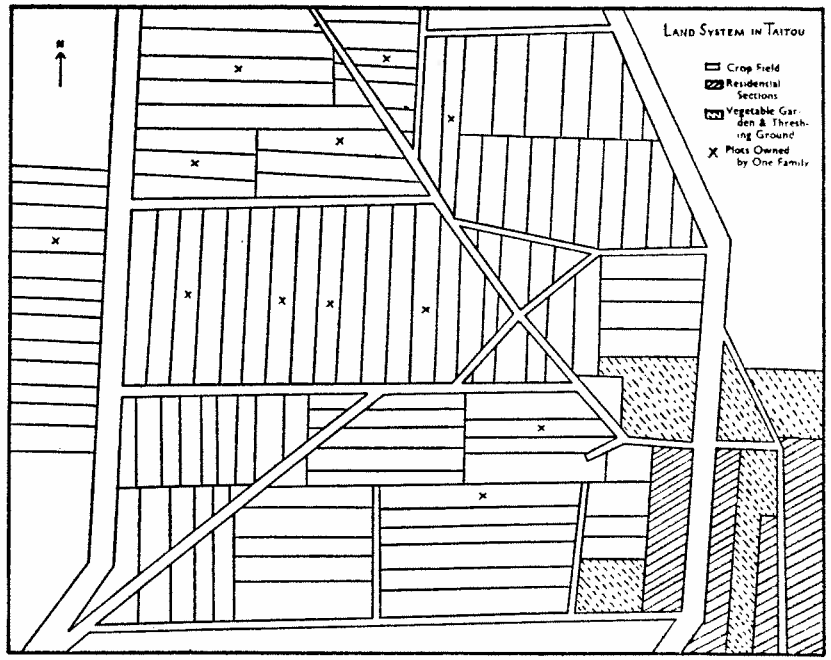
Even within the environs of a single village, there is a wide range in the value of the soil. The extreme fragmentation prevents ownership of all the land of a given quality by one or a few families and thereby reduces the possibility of complete crop failure for any one family. Since different land is more or less suited to different crops, a family which has land in several places can grow various kinds of food, will always get some return from its land, and, being, therefore, self-sufficient, has less need to trade. In former times the fields must have been larger. Since a father's holdings are equally divided among all his sons, there is an endless process of division and redivision. Another factor which increases the parceling is the numerous small transactions in buying and selling land. Families buy small bits of land from their neighbors, but seldom whole fields. It is impossible to recombine these fragments, for that would require owners of two or three fields to relinquish them at one time to one person. A family does not sell land unless it absolutely has to, so that the possibility of several families having to sell at once would be extremely rare.

The size of the fields varies greatly. The smallest may be only one tenth of a *mow*,* while the largest may be as much as five *mow* or more. Fields in the hills and valleys and in the water land are usually small, while those in the level land are large. In the hilly places many tiny fields are terraced on the slopes and bottoms. Sometimes these are just little corners—a plot as large as a *mow* is rare among them. The water land has always been

* A *mow* in this area is a little less than a quarter of an acre (4.3 *mow* = 1 acre); it is one and a half times larger than an official *mow* (240 sq. *pu*), and contains 360 sq. *pu*.



greatly treasured by the villagers, and each small piece is worth a great deal. It has been divided into many plots so that each of the well-to-do families can have one. In the north, west, and east sections of the level land few fields are smaller than one *mow*; most of them are from one to




This shows the fragmentation of the crop land which belongs to families of Taitou. The fields marked with X belong to one family. The family has also a number of fields in other sections which are not shown here.

two *mow* with quite a few three-*mow* pieces. Plots as large as four or five *mow* are, as a rule, owned by well-to-do families, or families that were well-to-do not long ago, because only a wealthy family could buy so much land in one time and in one piece. The purchase would be made when a family with large land holdings was in decline. Such opportunities are few. The P'an families in the village tried hard to keep their large fields from being broken up, but the increasing number of their descendants made this impossible, and finally most of the large fields were divided into small pieces.

According to Buck,* the average size of the fields throughout the country is half an acre, but in North China, or the wheat region, it is

* J. L. Buck, *Land Utilization in China* (Shanghai, Commercial Press, 1937), Chapter VI, p. 184.

over three times as large as in South China, or the rice region. "[The fields] averaged 0.12 and 0.17 acre for the Southwestern Rice and Rice-Tea Areas, as compared with 1.26 acres for the Spring Wheat Area." The neighborhood of Taitou does not conform to this. Taitou is in the winter-wheat and kaoliang area; as population is much denser here than in the spring-wheat region upon which Buck's figures are based, the fields are bound to be smaller, though they are considerably larger than those in the rice region.

A general summary of the size of family land holdings indicates four main groups: families with thirty to forty *mow*; those with twenty to twenty-nine *mow*; those with ten to nineteen *mow*; and those with holdings of from one to nine *mow*. About ten years ago there were two or three families each of whom had as much as eighty to ninety *mow*, and five or six families who had from fifty to sixty *mow*. In the last decade all these families have either broken into small units, or else been forced to sell their land because of losses inflicted by bandits or because of the extravagance of their children. At present, perhaps no family has a holding greater than forty *mow*.

The main crops are wheat, millet, barley, soybean, corn, sweet potatoes, and peanuts. A variety of vegetables are grown in the gardens: cabbage, turnip, onions, garlic, *chiu-tsai*, *yuan-sui*, radishes, cucumbers, spinach, several kinds of string beans, squashes, peas, and melons. There are also many kinds of fruit but none of them in quantity. While there are no orchards, one or two fruit trees may be seen on the edges of most of the vegetable gardens.

A great part of the land is good for growing sweet potatoes and peanuts, and the yield in these crops is abundant. Because most of the families own only a very limited quantity of land, they have to grow the crops which are most suited to the soil and which offer the best prospects of a good yield. From June to October, sweet potatoes, peanuts, and soybeans occupy almost 50 to 60 percent of the crop land. Next in importance is millet, to which 30 percent is given, leaving only 10 percent for other crops and vegetables. From November to June of the following year, part of the land is devoted to winter wheat and winter barley and part of it is left fallow. Families with the larger holdings grow more wheat, millet, and soybeans, while the poorer ones have to raise more sweet potatoes and peanuts. Wheat takes a longer time to grow and requires more fertilizer, and the yield is not high, but wheat flour is regarded as one of the best foods. Wealthy families like it and can afford to grow it. It is also a good



cash crop. Sweet potatoes grow well in the hilly and sandy soil and do not require much fertilizer, which is an advantage. They are a much more dependable food, both in quantity and nutritive value, than wheat. Therefore, a family without much land has to grow more *mow* of sweet potatoes than other crops. Since peanuts grow well in soil that is not suitable for wheat, they are the main cash crop of the poorer families. Soybeans are important as a cash crop and also for home consumption; all families grow them in large quantities. Millet is also generally grown and is the most important staple for local consumption.

All but a few families have vegetable gardens. Some vegetables are grown in the open fields. Each family grows from one tenth to one half of a *mow* of turnips. String beans and peas are planted between the rows of the crops or at the edges of the field. A few families also raise water and honey melons. On the water land wet rice is grown. The year's harvest of this crop is not of any significance in the village's whole economy, but it is interesting to note that it gives the village some rice culture which is rare for this area.

At the end of August (about the middle of the seventh month on the lunar calendar), right after the millet and soybeans have been harvested, the emptied fields are plowed and left fallow for about a month. Sowing of winter wheat begins at the end of September. Several days before this, well-prepared fertilizer is transported to the fields and dumped in heaps. When the sowing starts, three or more people go to the field with a team (an ox and a donkey or an ox and a mule), a plow, a wooden harrow, several fertilizer holders, seeds, and a certain amount of the powder made from soybean cakes. First, the seeds, the soybean powder, and the fertilizer are carefully mixed so that each handful of the mixture will contain the same proportion of seeds and fertilizer. Then, the plowman drives his team along the length of the field to make the furrows. The other two or three men fill the fertilizer holders with the mixture, and, hanging them over their shoulders, follow the course of the plow dropping handfuls of the mixture into the furrows about a foot apart. Each man covers one section of the field. This method takes more time and labor but where human labor is cheap and fertilizer and seeds are scarce, it is the preferred system. When the sowing is finished, the field is leveled with the wooden harrow, which is drawn by the team across the field. Then the furrows disappear, and the fertilizer and the seeds are well covered. In about a week, young shoots emerge from the earth and in a month they become strong enough to endure the cold weather. If the snowfall is heavy, the villagers

will expect a good harvest of wheat, but if it is too dry or if there is too much cold rain, the young plants will be severely damaged. Therefore, a heavy snow covering the earth always evokes joy and the celebration of the New Year Festival takes on more warmth and color.

In April when the weather turns warm, the young plants of wheat begin to grow again. Some farmers may weed the fields, but most do not. The growing period of winter wheat lasts a little over two months, that is, from April to the first part of June. On the fifth day of the fifth month, when the winter wheat is ripe, a big festival is held, the *Tuan Wu* Festival.

In this area wheat is not harvested by the sickle. The stalks are pulled out of the ground by the roots and bound in small bundles which are then taken to the threshing ground in wheelbarrows, on animal back, or on human shoulders. The crop is threshed and the grain is dried and stored. The threshing is done by animal and human labor, with the help of simple tools. Threshing time is the first time in the year that women work out of doors. Less work is required for growing wheat than is needed for other crops, but the capital outlay is high, the soil must be fertile, and the yield is not satisfactory.

The cultivation of millet is begun in the early spring. As soon as the weather is warm, the fallow fields in which the sweet potatoes or peanuts were grown last year are plowed up or softened with a harrow. Spring plowing should not be too deep. After this, prepared fertilizer is carried to the fields. At the beginning of May when the earth has been warmed through, the millet is sown. This is very like wheat sowing, but, because the soil is soft in spring and because the young shoots will need more solid earth for support, the fields are pressed down with a stone roller after the sowing. A farmer who has no stone roller tramples the ground with his feet.

After a week or so, if the weather is favorable, the small young leaves of the crop appear just above the ground. In another week, they are young shoots; and in still another week they are about three inches high. At this time the difficult work begins. The crowded young plants must be thinned out to give them space to grow freely. This can only be done by hand with the aid of a small hoe and, consequently, it is slow and tiresome work. Differentiating healthy plants from weak ones or from the young grass must be done by experienced farmers. About a week or ten days later, the weeds are cleared out and earth is packed around the bottom of the plants so that they can stand up. This is repeated in another ten days or two weeks, and again a third and a fourth time—the more



weeding the better for the crop. From the time the seeds sprout until the harvesting the farmers need not spend much time in their millet fields except what is required for pulling out the diseased or insect-ridden plants.

In this part of the country millet and kindred grains ripen in late August. Millet is harvested as wheat is. Women, especially young girls, cut the seed-heads from the stalks with pieces of sharpened iron when the crop is gathered on the threshing ground. All the women, young and old, work at this time, and girls may even work for other families and thus earn a little money for themselves. The threshing and stoning of the grain is also participated in by the women.

Peanuts are sown at almost the same time as millet, the beginning of May. Peanuts are usually alternated with sweet potatoes in the same fields. The fields are plowed and fertilized again, and carefully selected peanut seeds, which have been nurtured at home, are soaked in warm water for a while and then left in a warm place for a couple of days; when small buds appear the seeds are ready for sowing. The fertilizer is first applied in the furrows and then the seeds, about three at a time, are laid on top of the fertilizer. This is usually done by children. The field is leveled and hardened with a stone roller and is made so flat that when the young plant appears, solid pieces of earth cling to it. The first weeding is done when the tender leaves spread out and the young vines begin to extend. The second weeding comes after about fifteen days and, if the weeds grow fast, a third weeding may be needed. The field should be moist and soft from this time on so that the "needles" on which the peanut shells grow can easily penetrate the soil. When the shells have grown up and the kernels are forming, which takes about one and one-half months, dry weather is desirable, for if the ground is too wet the shells will rot. The farmers know this, and therefore they always grow this crop in hilly fields with a sandy soil.

Peanuts are harvested at the end of October. This work is so laborious, that, if peanuts were not a source of money and the vines the main source of animal feed, the crop might have been abandoned long ago. Formerly, the vines were cut and removed from the field, which was then plowed and the earth broken into a fine powder containing the peanut shells. When shaken into a sieve, made of a wooden frame and woven iron wire, the earth would fall through and the shells remain in the sieve. This method was abandoned about twenty years ago because it was too laborious. Today the whole thing is done with one tool, a hoe, and needs the labor of just one person, but the work requires much greater effort.

The farmer swings the hoe over his head and brings it down forcibly on the ground around the plant. This he does two or three times, breaking up the earth so that the entire plant can be lifted out, the shells still clinging to the roots. Any shells left in the ground are then picked up. The entire harvest is really accomplished by prolonged physical exertion. It is not even possible for several people to work together to shorten the task or to make the work less strenuous.

Women and children pick the shells off the vines, some of the girls hiring out for this kind of work. Also, girls go over the fields to pick up the remaining shells. In one day a diligent girl can collect as much as 20 or 30 pounds, which is worth a dollar or more. In ten days she can earn ten to fifteen dollars. This money will belong to her, not to the family as a whole. If the oil-pressing shops start work at this time, a girl has another chance to earn some money by working in the shops breaking the shells.

Of all the agricultural work done by these people, the cultivation of sweet potatoes is the hardest. In April the farmer begins to select, from among the fresh sweet potatoes which he has stored up during the past winter, the best ones for seed. These he buries in wet sand on a warm brick bed. After ten days or two weeks, young buds appear on the skins of the seeds. The buds put forth shoots in a short time and by now the weather is warm enough for the seeds to be planted in the vegetable garden. They are set out in rows in a nursery bed and heavy fertilizer is applied. When the young shoots grow into vines and start spreading on the ground, the nursery must be kept wet all the time.

After the wheat is harvested, the empty field is immediately prepared for the sweet potato plants. The field is plowed, and small, parallel ridges are built up. These ridges must be soft and smooth at the top. If the farmer has any fertilizer for this crop, it will be applied underneath these ridges, but usually he does not have any. Meanwhile, the farmer's wife and children are busy at home cutting the long vines in the nursery into short sections, which are then bound into bundles and carried to the field in baskets. The experienced father plants the vine sections on top of the ridges. At the same time the elder son or the hired laborer carries water by pail from a river, a pool, or a well which may be close by. The younger daughter and son pour about a pint of water into each of the small holes in which the vines have just been planted. The mother and the elder daughter fill the holes with earth, so that the whole vine section is covered except for one leaf which must be left outside. In a week, if



the weather is favorable, buds come out and develop into new vines. The weeding starts then and after a few days the vines must be weeded continuously. During the rainy season when the ground is wet, small roots come out all over the long vines. They must not be allowed to grow into the soil. So, the farmer's sons turn the vines from one side of the ridge to the other after every rain. If the furrows become too small because of the frequent washings of the rapid rain, the ground between the ridges is plowed and new earth applied to the tops to protect the sweet potatoes.

Sweet potatoes are harvested at the same time the peanuts are—in October, the busiest season for the farmers of Taitou. The vines are cut, usually by the younger boy. Then the father and the elder son come to the field with hoes, baskets, wheelbarrow, and donkey. They dig sweet potatoes very much as they dig peanuts. The younger boy collects the harvest into two big baskets which are tied on the wheelbarrow. The sweet potatoes are either taken home and stored for the winter, or they are moved into another open field for processing. This is largely women's work. In the field, the daughters begin to clean the sweet potatoes and the mother prepares a small table on the ground. She cuts the clean sweet potatoes with the cutter. Thin, round slices drop down through the hole underneath the cutter into a basket. These are spread on the ground and left to dry in the sunshine. After the midday meal, which the women prepare and eat at home and the men eat in the field, the work goes on. The women stop earlier to prepare the evening meal but the men continue to dig till it is too dark to see. On the way home, everybody is tired, with sore back, stiff legs, and burning hands, but they are cheerful because the harvest is good. One of the sons must sleep in a temporary shelter built where the sweet-potato slices are drying. Another son sleeps in a hut on the threshing ground, so that he can watch the peanuts stored there and the cabbages in the adjacent garden. It takes about two weeks for the work in the field to be done.

The family spends more and more time on the threshing ground and in the vegetable garden. The harvest has now been collected from the fields and piled on the ground and must be prepared for storing. Every day the large heap of peanuts that have not yet been sold must be spread out when the sun is warm and piled up after sunset lest they rot. The sweet-potato slices must be taken care of in the same way. The dried vines of the two crops have to be chopped up with grass and stored for feed for the ox and the donkey. Cabbage and other vegetables are harvested and stored or processed. When the threshing ground is again clear, the

small hut that was built only for the busy season is torn down and the materials are taken home.

The cultivation of soybeans is comparatively simple. Sowing begins immediately after the harvesting of wheat and barley. The farmer simply sows the seeds in the furrows, without having to plow the land beforehand. The seeds are dropped by a boy who follows the plow. Then the field is leveled by a wooden harrow and the seeds are covered. No fertilizer is used unless the farmer has a surplus, for it is not absolutely necessary. After three or five days, if the soil is wet enough, the young sprouts appear on the ground. The field is first weeded when the plant has three leaves and is given a second weeding within fifteen days. Rain and hot weather are needed now. When the bean shells have formed and are half-filled, the ground should not be wet and, therefore, too much rain is not desirable. When the shells are full and the beans become solid, the harvesting begins. The farmer and his elder son cut the plants with their sickles just above the ground and then transport the harvest on the back of the donkey or in the wheelbarrow to the threshing ground. Women do not participate in this at all.

It is interesting to note that within a considerable area only this village raises rice. The method of rice cultivation here is somewhat different from that seen in the rice-growing region. Our farmers do not sow the seeds first in a nursery and, consequently, they do not replant the young shoots, but simply sow the seeds directly in the field. In April or May when the water is warm and shallow, farmers plow the land by turning over a thick layer of the soil with an iron spade. The surface of the soil is warmed, small holes are dug in it and the rice seeds are sown. After several days the young shoots come out. Our farmers never irrigate their rice. Rice is considered a superior food in the village because it is so scarce. If a poor boy is asked what food he likes best, the answer always is bread of wheat flour, white rice, and pork cooked with cabbage.

Every family has a vegetable garden, no matter how small, and from early spring to winter it is in use. Since the garden is small, it is always intensively cultivated, fertilized, and watered. The harvest from a vegetable garden can usually meet a single family's needs. A great part of the cabbages raised in the garden is preserved for the winter. Turnips and string beans are also stored but a part of them may be sold in the market town. The cultivation of turnips is also much more intensive than that of other field crops. The young plants must be thinned several times and a number of weedings are needed before the ground is completely covered



by the leaves. Turnips are an important food in the winter and spring when the supply of other things runs low.

Farm implements are generally simple. Those of importance are the plow, two kinds of harrows, a weeding hoe and a digging hoe, wooden and iron rakes, wooden and iron shovels, a harvesting sickle, and different kinds of forks. For threshing, the stone roller and the flail are important. The wheelbarrow is most used, for the mule-cart is not seen in this part of the country. This is perhaps because the land is hilly and most of the roads are merely narrow paths. (For the details of the construction of these tools see Appendix I.)

With the exception of a few crude baskets, the villagers do not make their own tools because they can buy all they need at the special country fairs, held twice a year in the market town. Some of the tools are made in neighboring villages where materials are locally available; others are made in distant places and imported by dealers. Before the harvesting or plowing season, itinerant blacksmiths come to the village to repair or reinforce the metal tools or the steel parts. Although the implements are simple, a certain amount of skill is required to make them, and it takes time to acquire the skill. Besides, materials must be collected and a shop set up before anything can be done. These are all difficulties for an ordinary farmer; he simply does not have the time or the necessary information and therefore prefers to buy his tools ready-made. Recently a small foundry has been established in the village, where many of the farm and home-used metal implements can be locally made with local materials. Most of these implements are used by men. Women and children could hardly handle them.

For fertilizing the fields, both human and animal dung are carefully gathered and preserved. At a corner of the front court or in the backyard a pit and an adjacent pigpen are enclosed by walls or fences which open on the court. The pit is used as a privy and into it are gathered all the manure and other refuse from the barn or from outside; even the ashes from the kitchen are carefully preserved here. When the pit is full, the contents are removed to an open space set aside for the purpose and are covered with a layer of mud. In the pit the mixture has already undergone fermentation and here the process continues. According to the local farmer's experience, raw manure is not good; the fermented mixture is the best fertilizer he knows. When the sowing season arrives, the pile is broken down and the mixture is dried in the sun. It is then made into powder and transported to the fields as needed.

A second important fertilizer is soybean cakes. After the oil has been extracted from the beans, the residue is made into cakes which are used both as animal feed and fertilizer. As fertilizer, the cakes are always mixed with the compost, not only because the farmer cannot afford to use soybean cakes alone, but also because the local people believe that the mixture is more effective.

Earth from an old brick bed, an old stove, or from an old house is also used as fertilizer. People of the village build their beds with sun-dried bricks. Within such a bed there are two or three tunnels connected at one end with the kitchen stove and at the other with the chimney. When a fire is lighted in the stove the smoke passes through the tunnels into the chimney and then into the air. After a year or two, the earthen bricks of the bed become impregnated with smoke and chemically oxidized. In the spring the farmer rebuilds the bed with new bricks and removes the old ones which are broken into powder and either mixed with the manure or spread directly on the field. This is especially good for soybeans, sweet potatoes, and turnips.

Green manure is very rarely seen. This is partly due to the lack of mineral fuel. Instead of coal and gas, tree branches and leaves, stalks of wheat and other crops are used as fuel. Although the area is almost surrounded by mountains, wood is still too expensive to be burned as fuel. Consequently, every bit of vegetation that cannot be used for other purposes is carefully gathered and preserved to feed the kitchen stoves. The main sources of animal feed are the stalks of millet, the vines of peanuts and sweet potatoes, and many kinds of grass. In addition, the houses are all thatched with straw, except for a few that have been recently built with tile roofs. The farmer does not consider it economic to use green manure, since there are so many other uses for vegetation. Wheat stalks, for instance, are used for cooking. The ashes are taken out from the stove and mixed with animal manure to fertilize the field. Thus, the stalks serve two purposes: cooking and fertilizing. Other grasses and vines also serve this dual purpose. However, the ashes of the wheat stalks do not have the fertilizing value of green manure. Commercial fertilizer has not as yet been introduced to Taitou. The conservative farmers would not readily believe in the efficacy of the new stuff. Recently, some of the well-to-do farmers have bought fertilizer in Tsingtao, but it was the mixture of human and animal manure which they definitely prefer and not chemical fertilizer.

Collecting manure, however, has certain disadvantages. When the pit



is full, the contents are removed, not directly to the field out of the village, but to a place just before the front door or to the sidewalks of the streets. If rain comes before it is piled up and covered, the whole street becomes a mess of dirt. Another dangerous thing is the direct application of urine and manure to vegetables. To the farmer these are not serious objections. On the contrary, he is proud of having a large pit of dirt with three or four pigs playing in it, for this represents the prosperity of the family and helps him secure good wives for his sons. Besides, the villagers do not spend much time on matters which do not have direct reference to the economy of the family.

Recently, the Mass Education Association in Tinghsien, Hopei, made some effort to improve the condition of the privy in the farmer's home, and the universities of Cheeloo and Yenching tried to find ways of preventing it from being a source of disease in the summer. They have also tried to kill the insect germs in manure before it is used as fertilizer. An attempt was made to increase the quantity of fertilizer by mixing a certain amount of straw, earth, and greens with the manure. These efforts have brought some results, but the situation remains largely unchanged.

Oxen, mules, and donkeys are the customary farm animals. The donkey is the cheapest of these and even a family with only ten *mow* of land has a donkey. If a family owns fifteen *mow*, a small cow joins the donkey to form a team; a family with twenty *mow* can have a donkey and a large ox; a family with more than forty *mow* can have a donkey, a large ox, and a mule. A family owning less than ten *mow* cannot afford any animal and must either work without one or cooperate with a more fortunate neighbor by exchanging labor for the use of his animal.

Oxen are chiefly used for plowing and sowing, and seldom for pulling wheelbarrows or drawing the millstones. After plowing or sowing an ox remains in the barn, under the shade of the willow trees, or in the sunshine near a wall. Mules are used more frequently—for transporting harvested crops from the field to the threshing ground, pulling the millstones when the donkey is too tired, or for riding to other villages on visits.

Practically every family has a donkey. They are used for every kind of transportation and in many ways in domestic work. Housewives of the village do not often touch the ox, and never try to handle a mule, but they can control donkeys like pets. The absence of a donkey would not only hinder the small farmer in his field, but his wife at home as well.

Although agriculture is the main means of livelihood, many subsidiary occupations supplement income in the slack periods of the farm work

calendar. For example, a little foundry was established by two brothers of the P'an family in Taitou. They had previously worked in a machine shop in Tsingtao and the methods used in their own business were modern, although simple. Having made a handsome profit, the family bought several *mow* of land and built two or three better houses. The brothers receive orders for metal implements used on the farm not only from fellow villagers but also from the people of other villages in the vicinity. Once they cast a bell for the village church, which preferred to patronize a local shop.

There is also a woodworking shop where one carpenter and an apprentice make furniture parts, plain doors and windows, and a number of simple farm implements. In addition to filling villagers' orders they produce goods to be sold in the market town. There are other carpenters who do not own shops but who work in the homes of their customers. A carpenter can earn much more than a farmer. He receives both board and money, and his wage is higher than a farm laborer's. The fact that very few follow this trade, despite its pecuniary advantages, indicates the importance of farm work in the villagers' eyes and their obvious preference for it.

There are three or four cloth weavers. One of them once bought an improved loom and opened a workshop. There he worked for himself and sold his products in the market town or in other villages. Unfortunately, he had to stop because he was short of capital and also because he could not work steadily at it. All the other weavers have only old looms and their rate of production is very low. Recently they have been forced to compete with factory-made cloth which comes in to the country in daily increasing quantities. Young people prefer the fine cloth whenever they can afford it, though the old people still believe that homespun is much better—they say it lasts longer and is better-suited to rough farm work. The importation of cloth has resulted in an interesting compromise between the old and young. Many families have given up the traditional spinning of yarn from raw cotton and now they buy the factory-made cotton yarns in the market town and weave it into cloth at home. This cloth still preserves, to a great extent, the old pattern because it is woven on the old looms. The young people are temporarily satisfied with it because they cannot often afford the new relatively expensive cloth. For the time being they accept the compromise. Their elders console themselves by listening to the sound of the old loom and by seeing the familiar patterns emerge from it, taking comfort in the thought that the old



traditions still exist and that the world has not yet gone to the devil. They are much concerned, however, about a new problem created by the situation—how to keep their daughters occupied during the long spring, now that they do not have to spin.

A few years ago three families owned oil-pressing shops. In the winter and spring they pressed oil from the locally raised peanuts and soybeans. One of them also opened a shop for making the baskets used as containers for shipping oil to Tsingtao. It was a profitable business and for some time supplied work for ten or more people; but, recently, due to bandit raids and heavy taxes, all the shops have been closed. They still have their equipment, however, so that when order is reestablished they may resume work.

There are five or six masons who build houses for the villagers and for people of neighboring villages. Some of them also work periodically in Tsingtao. Their earnings are as good as the carpenters' and several families whose sons are masons have attained a better standing in the community.

It is interesting to note that all these craftsmen are members of poor families. Some have bettered the family status, others have kept their relatives from starvation. Only the oil-pressing shops were owned by members of wealthy families. But we see that nonetheless very few are engaged in industry. What the local people value most is land: big land holdings and a prosperous farm are to them the real signs of prosperity and this is why no rural industry has ever developed into a business of any significance. Necessity is the only incentive, or at least it is the main one, for taking up any means of livelihood other than farming.

None of the artisans in this village makes his living entirely from his trade, with the exception of the preacher of the Christian church and the teacher of the Christian school. All the masons, carpenters, weavers, workers in the small foundry, the village schoolteacher, the crop watcher, and the several village officers work on their land with their families during the sowing and harvesting seasons or whenever they happen not to be engaged in their professional work. All artisans work for wages only part of which consists of money, the rest being in meals and, occasionally, lodging.

Independent trade ventures attract the ambitious young men. In the winter, or whenever they are not occupied on the farm, they may collect eggs and poultry, or vegetables to sell in Tsingtao, thus making a modest gain. Some go to the cities and purchase things used at the New Year

celebration, or other seasonally needed goods, which they resell on special market days at a small profit. Three or four men are regular traders and make frequent buying trips to Tsingtao and neighboring market towns. Their earnings are used by their families to improve the homes or farms or to buy more land.

Fishing is not a regular occupation but is a minor source of income for women, some of whom go to the sea while the tide is receding to dig for shellfish which they sell to the villagers or to the seafood traders in the market town. An experienced woman may derive a fair income in this way. In a slack summer, young men also fish. They do not sell their catches but contribute them to the family larder.

In the winter when farmers have little to do on the farm, they collect wood or other kinds of fuel on the near-by hills. If a man is diligent, he can collect enough for the entire winter and early spring. It helps the family very much.

There are two kinds of hired farm laborers, the yearly or permanent, and the daily or temporary, laborer. Hired farm workers may also be classified according to skill and experience both in agriculture and domestic work. Some are chief laborers or farm overseers, while those who are unskilled, or have just started to work on the farm, are assistant laborers. A yearly laborer is not necessarily one who works throughout the entire year. Usually his term of employment runs from the sixteenth day of the first month on the lunar calendar up to the first day of the tenth month. Daily laborers are hired chiefly in the busy seasons, when sowing, hoeing, and harvesting have to be done. Families who have yearly laborers may also hire daily laborers for a few days to get the work done on time. During this period a group of able-bodied men carrying hoes or sickles and wearing straw raincoats and rain hats wait every morning at a corner of the main street in the market town to be hired. This is called locally the "market of laborers." Any farm family who needs help sends someone there to hire a man. There are no established rates, but usually the rate of the first engagement is maintained. The people who come to the market for employment are for the most part poor farmers from the area who take care of their own small farms, working on them either before or after the busy season, or at night when they return home. Sometimes a family asks a poorer neighbor to help. In this case they do not go to the labor market but they still follow the market rate. This may become a more or less permanent relationship between the two families. The poorer family may borrow animals, seeds, or implements from the richer one



without payment, or the richer family may just send its team to plow the other's land. The wife and children of the poorer family will help on the threshing ground or in the home of the richer one when they are needed.

The engagement of a yearly laborer is usually made in the winter through a go-between. As soon as the matter is settled, the parents of the would-be laborer may ask the employer to pay them a part of their son's wage. If the arrangement is to be continued for the coming year, the laborer must be informed through the go-between before he leaves the work and his wage is decided upon at that time. On the other hand, if either or both do not want to continue, both parties must be informed before the date of departure. Besides the money wage, a yearly laborer also receives some compensation in kind; in this village the rule is two *sheng* (about sixteen pounds) of wheat, ten feet of cloth or an ordinary suit, a straw raincoat and a straw rain hat, all the tobacco that he can consume, and some food at the New Year Festival. Occasionally, a little money is given to him when he is allowed to visit a village opera or to attend the annual fairs in the market town. A hired laborer's board and room are supplied by the employer.

The hired men and the family members who also work in the field at this time usually have their breakfast and midday meal in the field. Several special meals are given a laborer throughout the working year. The first is a dinner of welcome on his first day at work. The so-called rejoicing feast occurs on the second day of the second month. A third is the *Ching-Ming* Feast, at the beginning of the third month. Then comes the *Tuan-Wu* Feast on the fifth day of the fifth month. There are also special meals in both the sixth and the seventh months. After these, the biggest one, the *Chung-Chiu* Feast, occurs on the fifteenth day of the eighth month. In the ninth month there are a number of unusual meals because the season is specially busy. The last is the farewell dinner given on the first day of the tenth month. The working year is now over and the hired men are leaving. If they have been retained for the coming year, the dinner will be more lavish.

On three occasions the meals are regular feasts, according to local custom; these are the *Ching-Ming* Feast, the *Tuan-Wu* Feast, and the *Chung-Chiu* Feast. In each of these a number of meats, eggs, fresh fish and seafood, green vegetables, and locally made whiskey are served. Generally, every family must show its hired men that it has done for them all that its economic ability permits. Otherwise, the laborers complain and broadcast the fact that the family is stingy, which would make

it difficult for them to get people to work on their farms. On these three occasions, the farm hands are treated as guests; the head of the family pours wine for them and begs them to eat as much as they can. There is a common belief that to feed the hired men well is one of the prerequisites for the success of a family's farm management.

In a small family a hired man may sleep in the same room with an unmarried son; he may have a room of his own, or he may live in the small hut on the threshing ground. In a well-to-do family special quarters are built for the hired help. The rooms are simply furnished, the occupants themselves take care of them. Women are not allowed to come to such quarters. The laborers are not allowed to take along their wives, but they may visit their families several times during the year.

Relations between the family members and the hired laborers are generally congenial. Change in economic status is frequent, so that in the same generation a family who has been hiring laborers may come to the point of hiring their own members out to others. On the other hand, a number of families who were poor may become relatively well-to-do. Since mobility of this kind is great, one family cannot feel superior or inferior to another. Moreover, most of the hired men come from families who own land, though it may be but a small piece, and as long as a family owns even an inch of land they consider themselves on a par with their fellow villagers. A comparatively well-to-do family may have a son working for a neighboring family or for one in a neighboring village. This family may have, say, ten *mow* of land. Since the father, mother, and one son can take care of the land by themselves, the other son is able to work for others. By diligence and thrift small pieces of land may be added every year, so that the family is respected in the community, and no one would look down upon a hired laborer from such a family. All the hired laborers are either from the same village or from villages in the same area. The families know each other. Workers and owners all follow the same occupation and work together in the fields. All these factors tend to minimize distinctions between wage-earners and employers. But recently the situation has been changing. More disputes arise; laborers demand higher wages and better meals. The employers try voluntarily or involuntarily, to meet these demands, but they complain that it is very difficult to handle hired laborers in these days. It is not easy to make a fair judgment as to which side is right and which is wrong. The situation as a whole is unfortunate because the rising price of labor is not due to a natural shortage but to social and political chaos. Since the outbreak of civil war, with the attendant increase in



banditry and local upheaval, many young people have abandoned the old tradition and have become restless. Some have joined the bandits, others have entered the militia employed by ambitious local chieftains, and others have simply disappeared.