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Author(s): Victor Nee

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# Peasant Household Individualism

Victor Nee

My interest in peasant household individualism was stimulated by the crisis in collective farming that took place in a village where I conducted field work in the spring of 1980. During the course of this field work, I was impressed by the basic success of collectivization in improving the condition of life for villagers in Yangbei. The establishment of the cooperative health plan and medical clinic brought effective medical care to the village, cutting back drastically on infectious disease and infantile mortality. The education system, substantially expanded during the Cultural Revolution, brought public education to the village, increasing educational attainment among younger peasants. The local government and village organizations appeared committed to local development, and they were generally staffed by cadres who impressed me as well meaning and dedicated. Finally, the improvement in the quantity and quality of factors of production developed after collectivization was substantial. Construction and maintenance of roads, development of new seed strains, availability of low-interest loans to purchase tractors, construction of a small hydroelectric plant that brought low-cost electric power to the village, the county-run agrotechnical station, the meteorological station that provided accurate weather forecasts, and many more smaller improvements have been part of a broadly based, state initiated modernization program in Wuping county. These improvements benefited peasants in Yangbei.

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Despite these gains, during the course of my field work both peasants and cadres told me that certain farmers in the village still preferred to farm as single households and were dissatisfied with collective farming. During my stay in the village, these farmers were not a vocal group, constituting a seemingly silent opposition to the efforts to make collective farming more efficient and productive. Instead I sought to understand the reforms underway in the village at the time of my arrival. To be sure, there was considerable debate and discontent among villagers during my stay. This surfaced during the course of team meetings and in interviews with villagers. But it appeared to be articulated in the context of implementing reforms to solve the problems villagers complained about. With the reduction of the size of production teams, the policy to decentralize control to teams, and introduction of more effective incentive systems, it seemed prudent to assume that the basic features of collective farming would continue in Yangbei as they had since the mid-1950s. It was not until my return to the United States that I received a stronger confirmation of a more widespread preference for household production among peasants in Yangbei. A team cadre sent me a letter that informed me of developments in the village since my departure. I learned that the reduction in the size of teams had proceeded rapidly, resulting in one team left with only two households. This was in sharp contrast to the size of the old teams, which ranged from twenty to thirty households. From another letter, which I received in the spring of 1981, I learned that teams had divided up their assets and assigned land to individual households.

Before I left the village, the villager who later wrote to me told me that there would be further reductions in the size of teams than what I had witnessed during my stay. I assumed that liberalization of state controls would result in a situation similar to the period after the Great Leap Forward, when China adopted agrarian policies similar to the Soviet New Economic Policy. But I had not anticipated that decollectivization was on the agenda of reform. With the advantage of hindsight, I could better interpret the evidence in my data, especially those from my informant interviews, pointing to a persistence of peasant household individualism.

This return to household production in many areas of China necessitates reexamination of the peasant household as an economic unit. Since the mid-1950s, China had emphasized the development and consolidation of rural institutions as the means for accomplishing the modernization of agriculture. Analyses of rural development have for this reason focused largely on the four-tiered local organization sys-

tem, composed of the county government, people's commune, production brigade, and production team.<sup>1</sup> By contrast, relatively little has been written on the Chinese peasant household as an economic unit.<sup>2</sup> Scholars assumed for the most part that the team, brigade, and commune system was a permanent feature of the rural landscape, and that the long-term trend pointed to further consolidation of collective modes of agricultural production.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, it was widely assumed that while the peasant household continued to be an important social unit for family life, marriage, and reproduction, as a production unit it played only a small role in the residual private sector, having been eclipsed by team and brigade management of agricultural production.

This chapter attempts to explain peasant preference for individual household production over collective farming. Although collective farming may still be in some areas the dominant mode of agriculture production, if the argument about the persistence of peasant household individualism is valid, I would anticipate a consolidation of the trend toward household cultivation, provided that the state persists in its current policy of relaxation of controls. The question I seek to answer is why, after more than two decades of state-initiated efforts to develop and consolidate collective farming, have peasants in many areas moved quickly to dismantle collective farming, choosing instead to farm as individual households?

This is not to say, however, that in all areas peasants would choose household production over collective farming, if the state were to relax all controls over agricultural production. The explanation of peasant preference for household production will also specify the likely conditions under which peasants may strongly prefer cooperation rather than going it alone. In these circumstances, cooperation is more likely to emerge from the productive process rather than as a result of state controls over agricultural production. Moreover, in these areas local officials in county and commune governments may actually have pressured peasants to adopt the household contract system so that the locality they administer remains in step with other localities where decollectivization has progressed rapidly.

There is little in the theoretical literature on peasants that provides a ready answer to why peasants prefer household production and under what conditions they will seek cooperative work arrangements. According to the moral economy approach, peasants would be expected to prefer the security associated with collective farming over the greater risks of farming alone, especially in poorer areas where peasants live close to subsistence margins.<sup>4</sup> If in China collectivization has failed to

result in high growth rates comparable to those achieved in Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan during the same period, at least it did guarantee basic securities that Chinese peasants had not enjoyed in the past. If peasants are risk averse and seek to maximize security, why have the poorer mountainous and backward areas been at the forefront of the trend to dismantle collective farms? Samuel Popkin's "rational peasant" approach may be more useful in explaining peasant household individualism insofar as it assumes that peasants are rational in responding to incentive structures, understand investment logic, and are not necessarily risk averse in the pursuit of utility maximization.<sup>5</sup> Like Popkin, I draw on the insights provided by economists to explain Chinese peasants' preference for household production. I take an "economic approach" in the sense that I assume peasants, like other people, seek to maximize value through rational calculation of how to gain the optimum rate of returns for the resources they have in hand.<sup>6</sup>

Throughout the world peasant small farms have routinely achieved very high levels of efficiency.<sup>7</sup> The view that small farms in China also operated at high levels of efficiency has been argued by Chinn, and by Dittrich and Myers for the prewar period.<sup>8</sup> Berry and Cline observed that Taiwan farms of less than .5 hectares produce twice as much per hectare as do farms of 2 hectares.<sup>9</sup> If the present leaders in China and local cadres are concerned with raising agricultural productivity, small household farms are probably superior. I will argue in this chapter that it is the persistent belief that households can do better on their own that leads peasants to rush back to household production when given the opportunity by the state.

Insofar as the study attempts to explain peasant household individualism it seeks to develop a theory. As George Homans has maintained, "a theory of a phenomenon is an explanation of the phenomenon, and nothing that is not an explanation is worthy of the name of theory."<sup>10</sup> The first hypothesis follows directly from the above discussion.

Hypothesis 1: Peasants are more likely to prefer household goals than individualistic and community goals.

If hypothesis 1 is supported, then the importance of peasant household maximizing behavior is a matter of course. In hypothesis 2, I specify the conditions under which peasants will prefer household production.

Hypothesis 2: If the household division of labor is adequate as a production unit, peasants are likely to prefer individual household production over collective forms of production.

Implicit in hypothesis 2 is a specification of the condition under

which peasants are likely to prefer cooperation. When the household division of labor is no longer adequate as a production unit, peasants are likely to prefer cooperative work arrangements.

Research for this village study was conducted in two stages. The first stage involved intensive interviews with former educated youths who lived in the village from 1969 to 1975. These interviews were conducted primarily at Cornell University, where I interviewed two young Chinese from Xiamen from December 1977 to September 1978. The interviews produced over 1,200 pages of interview text, which presented a surprisingly rich and detailed participant observation account of the years these former educated youths lived and worked in Yangbei village. Although the interview material was internally consistent and very credible, since my informants were not constrained in the candidness with which they retold their observation of life in the village, there was no way for me to confirm the objectivity and accuracy of their account without going to the village myself. I was able to do so in the spring of 1980, when I traveled to Wuping county in Fujian to conduct field work in Yangbei village. Accompanied by a former educated youth from Xiamen, who served as my research assistant and interpreter from Hakka to standard Chinese, I lived in Wuping county for one month. During this period I spent three weeks in the village, both to obtain an independent check on the data I had collected at Cornell and to collect additional data on subsequent developments in the village following the departure of the educated youths.

During the course of my field work, I conducted household surveys in four production teams, interviewed in my room peasants, cadres, and technical personnel, and had free access to all brigade and team statistical records. At the conclusion of my brief field work, I felt satisfied that my informants in Ithaca had given me an accurate and insightful participant observation account, and I was able to fill in gaps of data such as statistical information on population trends and economic performance and on developments since the departure of the educated youths from the village. To my knowledge, this was the first time that an American social scientist was able to conduct field work in a setting about which detailed data was provided first by refugee reports outside of China.

### **The Setting**

Yangbei village is located in the southwestern corner of Fujian province in a Hakka district near the Guangdong provincial boundary. In a

mountainous area, the village is considered quite remote. Despite recent improvements in roadways, travel to Yangbei from Xiamen still requires nearly two days. Within Wuping county, communications are surprisingly well developed, with daily bus schedules connecting Xiangdong commune with Wuping county seat and to the border towns in Guangdong province. Although provincial authorities consider the area backward, Wuping county is a rice-surplus area that sells grain to the state. Yangbei's standard of living is only slightly below the national norm, with peasant per capita grain consumption at 523 jin of unhusked rice per year, and peasant per capita income from the collective sector about 68 yuan in 1980. Yangbei in 1980 was a single-surname village with a population slightly over 2,400.

A case might be made that Yangbei's conditions are not dissimilar to those of other villages located in peripheral areas that are distant from central places. Certainly in a country where mountainous areas predominate, the number of villages in peripheral and less-developed areas is not inconsiderable. Moreover, Yangbei's political and economic integration following collectivization has followed essentially the same pattern as other villages in China. I do not, however, rest my case on whether or not Yangbei is representative. Not all areas in China have experienced the collapse of collective farming to the extent Yangbei has in the past years.<sup>11</sup> By explaining why collective farming came undone in Yangbei, I suggest that the propositions developed in this case study can be useful in explaining the return to household production in other areas of China.

### **Continuing Importance of the Peasant Family**

The collective economy in Yangbei guaranteed each household a basic grain ration, modest welfare funds for the poorest villagers, and inexpensive health care. However, as William Parish has argued, the peasant household still must fend for itself.<sup>12</sup> In the end the insurance provided by the collective was not that large, and the family integrity was still maintained as in the pre-Liberation village. This can be seen in the problems of the needy villagers who depend on collective insurance. Probably the most destitute members of the village are elderly men and women who do not have families to support and take care of them. The team supports these "five-guarantee" households. But at levels terribly close to subsistence, providing them with only their grain ration and no cash income. The "five-guarantee" households are expected to fend for themselves in other areas, such as tending their own

private plot, raising poultry, and gathering twigs and straws for cooking. Though they receive medical attention from the brigade barefoot doctors without paying the annual fee to participate in the cooperative medical program, the team provides them with no other services. Neighbors may provide some temporary help in tending the vegetable plot or gathering fuel. But the single elderly have no assurance that help will be forthcoming when it is needed, or if it is, that it will be anything other than temporary, short-term, limited assistance.

On the other end of the age spectrum were a number of orphans whose parents died of malnutrition during the famine in 1960, and who have subsequently grown up. Very young orphans were adopted by kinsmen. Older children who were able to take care of themselves, however, continued to live in their parents' home. Their experience of growing up in the village mirrored the single elderly in the sense that they received very little informal assistance from neighboring households.

Divorced peasants try to remarry as quickly as possible due to the difficulties of living alone in the village. Women tend to remarry soon after divorce since by village custom, the house and custody of the children are kept by the man. Men also seek to find a new spouse soon after divorce. Household chores such as washing clothes, tending the private plot, and collecting fuel are considered women's work. Men who attempt to do women's work are subject to derisive ridicule by fellow villagers. Widows and widowers with older children are better off because the household tasks performed by a departed spouse can be assumed by their children. Nonetheless, they too seek to remarry. Widows with children, however, are less likely to do so since the marriage of a son would fill out the household structure, leaving the widow with security in old age.

The minimal welfare system combined with a lack of a tradition of charity, even between kinsmen, render peasants all the more dependent upon their family as a source of basic security and well-being. Sociologists have noted the weakness of the village community in presocialist China.<sup>13</sup> This feature of village society appears to have persisted in Yangbei even after collectivization. There was in Yangbei little evidence of a spill-over effect from cooperation in the collective economy into forms of informal mutual assistance between households. Peasants gossiped about hardships confronted by more unfortunate neighbors, but they did not try to provide help due to concerns that this might result in recurrent claims made on their own meager resources. Even prosperous households were vigilant in the conservation of household



resources and avoided claims by needy kinsmen and neighbors.

The existence in the village of the very poor, comprising a stratum of single elderly, orphans, men without wives, and other irregular household arrangements, served to remind peasants of the importance not only of family, but also of having an optimal household structure. In Yangbei the typical households tended to be either stem or nuclear families. Households with joint families were uncommon, and they tended to be unstable. Household divisions generally occurred earlier than in peasant households in Taiwan or presocialist China.<sup>14</sup> The stem family provided a more favorable division of labor. In the stem family, grandparents helped out in taking care of the young, tending the private plot, performing household chores, and feeding the pig. This freed the mother to work in the collective fields to bring in additional workpoints for the family or to spend more time scouring the nearby hills for twigs and grass to burn in the family hearth. By contrast, the nuclear family experienced greater difficulty in achieving the optimal division of labor and tended to have a low laborer/dependent ratio. This was the case especially when the children were very young and the mother remained at home to take care of them and perform the household tasks, leaving only the father earning workpoints for the household. But the difficulties faced by the nuclear family were short term. Once the children grew up and began to contribute to the household economy, the nuclear family could also prosper.

To sum up, despite the guarantees provided by the collective economy, peasants continued to rely upon family-based strategies and calculations to achieve well-being and security. The fact that the collective economy was unable to provide more than the minimal subsistence-level guarantees, the difficulties of living alone, and the weakness of the peasant community were important bases for the persistence of peasant household individualism. Thus as long as villages supported living standards close to subsistence margins and collective welfare programs remained minimal, peasants continued to rely upon their households for their basic security and well-being.

### **Household Utility Maximization Versus Community Goals**

The moral economy school predicts that, when peasants are at the subsistence margin, the community will form a contract to provide a secure floor for all villagers. But George Foster, in his work on peasants and the limited good, suggests that the more common reaction among peasants is to view the world as a limited good or a zero-sum

game.<sup>15</sup> If anyone else in the community benefits then it must be that I am losing. The degree to which this will be the perception varies around the world, but in China since collectivization in the mid-1950s there were many reasons for the zero-sum image to be an accurate one. With only very limited chances of moving out of the village or of starting nonagricultural enterprises in the village, everyone has been drawing on a single set of resources. The results are seen in how calculating peasants are in their relations with neighbors.

Peasant rational calculation tended to focus on maximizing individual household advantage over the interests of the collective economy. This manifested itself in a persistent problem, according to Yangbei cadres, in the complaint that villagers lacked genuine enthusiasm when working on the collective fields, by contrast to the effort displayed in the course of work on household private plots, sidelines, and household chores. This disparity between productivity in the collective and in private sectors points to the heart of the problem of collective farming in Yangbei. Simply stated, if all households benefited from the team economy performing well, then those who worked harder worried that their additional effort, though ultimately benefiting their own household, also might be subsidizing those who worked less hard. Accordingly, peasants put their best effort into their private plots and household sidelines, and were less likely to work with the same productive zeal and efficiency in the collective sector. This is the classic "free rider" dilemma.<sup>16</sup>

In fact, peasants are surprisingly fine-tuned in their calculations of household interests, something which the more egalitarian Dazhai workpoint system did not take into account. Moreover, they are highly responsive to incentive structures and demonstrate a subtle grasp of investment logic. This could be seen in the investment decisions centered on the purchase and sale of the household pig. According to Yangbei peasants, the timing of a man's purchase and sale of the family pig could result in greater or lesser profits given equal skills in raising a pig to full maturity. With the interest of seasoned investors, peasants followed the fluctuations of prices in the local markets to time their market transactions. On the basis of past experience, the peasant investor tried to anticipate periods when fresh pork was likely to be in short supply, and therefore prices higher. There are, however, many factors that influence price levels for pork. For example, a bad harvest year tends to result in tighter pork supplies and higher prices, whereas good years result in lower prices for pork. Thus a peasant must take into account the effect of weather conditions on the next season's harvest.

To complicate matters, the peasant investor must also try to anticipate seasonal fluctuations in the price of grain in the free market. As a rule of thumb, grain prices go up during the "spring hunger" months when peasants run short of grain allotted to them by the team. Initially, the price of fresh pork drops somewhat as supply increases when peasant households are unable to feed fully mature pigs and dump them on the local markets. But after this initial selling, the price of pork may climb when supply of pigs ready for slaughter declines toward the end of the "spring hunger" period. Thus the seasoned peasant investor in Yangbei sought to purchase the baby pig at a good price, buy and store free-market grain when grain was plentiful, even when the household had plenty in store for its immediate consumption needs, have sufficient grain supplies to last through the initial period of "spring hunger" to provide for both human and animal consumption, and finally sold the family pig as it entered into its high feeding period when prices were at their seasonal high. If prices for fresh pork in the local markets were higher than in past years, peasants responded to higher prices by investing in purchasing more grain and raising more pigs, and vice versa. However, not all households were able to take advantage of favorable price trends. A poorer household, for example, might not have adequate cash reserves to be in a position to invest in grain when it was relatively cheap. Instead it might be compelled to enter the market to buy grain when grain was most expensive. According to the supply-demand principle, grain prices were likely to be the highest when most households ran short of grain and needed to purchase additional supplies on the free market.

Peasants' marketing activity provides clear evidence of maximizing behavior, calculated to take full advantage of marginal profits through participation in external markets. Peasants in Yangbei are extremely attentive to price fluctuations not only in their own local market, but in the surrounding markets as well, including those in the border market towns in Guangdong. Village gossip is to a large degree centered on current market news. In the evenings men like to gather in a friend's house to pick up the most recent news about prices in the neighboring market towns. Women, as well, participate in the talk on market news, passing current news to their husbands, or using it for their own market activity. Peasant women often walk to Guangdong to sell vegetables and to buy grain or poultry for their own households to take advantage of more favorable prices in the Guangdong markets. Or they purchase items for their neighbors, receiving a small carrying charge for making the purchase. Men also walk to Guangdong to sell products from their

household sidelines for slightly higher prices. The underlying logic of their marketing activity reveals careful and often extremely precise calculations of gaining optimal returns on resources controlled by the household economy. This same maximizing logic can be found in other areas of peasant behavior, revealing that priority is given to household interests over community goals.

An analysis of fertility in Yangbei before the recent strict birth control policy was implemented provides a clear example of household maximizing behavior that worked to undermine community goals. Yangbei peasants, like poor people elsewhere in the developing world, had large families out of choice.<sup>16</sup> Calculations of benefits and costs of having children were such that many peasants wanted to have more than two children, rather than less. In this respect, Yangbei peasants did not differ from other people in the decisiveness of economic factors in influencing fertility rates.<sup>17</sup>

To a large extent the problem was rooted in the system for allocation of grain to households. In the decades following collectivization, the amount of grain Yangbei peasants transferred to the state through taxation and compulsory sales left many households with less grain than they consumed each year. This compelled many households to buy grain on the free market at much higher prices than the state purchasing price for grain. For this reason, peasants preferred to receive payment for work in the collective sector in grain rather than cash, which purchased several times less grain than the cash equivalent in workpoints. However, the grain ration assigned to each household was based upon the number of people that belonged to the household. Thus with each additional child, a household gained a larger allotment of grain from the team. Moreover, a child's allotment, though smaller than that of an adult, was considered larger than what the child actually consumed. Thus households that had few children were at a disadvantage to those that had many in terms of basic grain allotment. For example, a one-child household might enjoy a high laborer/dependent ratio, but even if both parents worked hard for the collective and earned surplus workpoints above the cost of the grain allotted to them, the household often ran out of grain in the course of the year. It was thus forced to purchase expensive grain on the free market when surplus workpoints were converted to cash at the end of the year (*fenhong*) at prices several times higher than the state purchasing price. There was therefore strong incentive for the one-child family to continue to have children so that at least it could be paid in grain for work done in the collective sector. In addition, each child brought an additional private

plot allotment and the possibility of having surplus grain to sell on the free market.

On the other side of the cost and benefit calculation, families with many children, even those with low laborer/dependent ratios, were not penalized for running deficit accounts with the team. In these households, the mother was likely to remain at home to rear small children. They therefore often had only one labor power, the husband, earning workpoints in the collective sector. As a result these households consumed more grain each year than they could pay for through accumulated workpoints, and thus they overdraw their accounts. But there was no penalty for overdrafting. Moreover, a household could overdraw for successive years on the understanding that at some future date it would repay the team for its deficit account. It received no cash income from the team during this period, since any surplus left in the account went to pay off the deficit accumulated over the years. In reality the household actually benefited from being able to overdraw. First, the real value of grain, reflected in the free-market price, was several times higher than the price set by the state, thus the household repaid the team at the state purchasing price for grain it could theoretically sell on the free market for much more. Moreover, the team charged no interest on the deficit account, nor did it set a schedule for repayment. Second, by overdrawing the household was, in a sense, subsidized by the team to have more children, further reducing the cost of having children. Some peasants calculated that when their children grew older and entered the work force, the children could repay the overdraft account in a matter of a few years. For this reason, they believed that it was better to have more children than to have to spend money buying free-market grain, since at least there was something to show for in the end, whereas grain was just eaten up.

Like fertility, the spacing of children was also influenced by economic considerations. While parents derived benefits from having children, they tried to reduce the costs as much as possible. One way to do this was to space the birth of children in such a way that the birth of the last child coincided with the maturation of the first child, who then could help in raising the younger siblings and reducing the amount the family must overdraw. A family with three children might decide to have a fourth, knowing that the first child was already old enough to babysit this younger sibling, allowing the mother to return to the fields to work. Soon the first child would also be old enough to earn workpoints to help pay for the cost of having additional children. If the family continued to have more children until they had five, by the time

the third child had entered the work force the family would have cleared its debt to the team and begun to have a surplus account. Thus the birth and rearing of the last two children cost less to the household than the first three, and was in fact fully supported by the parents and three older children. The household was then in the enviable position of having a large grain allotment, a sizable private plot, and cash income from both the collective and private sectors.

Although the cost to a household of having more than two children was not high, and was even in some ways beneficial, the collective economy suffered if there were many households that overdrew their accounts. Such households were a burden to the collective economy in the sense that the team must use its reserves to subsidize them, leaving less funds for investment and saving. In poorer teams, the burden of supporting overdraft households had a demoralizing effect on the team as a whole. This was because poorer teams already had little surplus at the end of the year, and not only were they left with no funds for investment and savings, but they often did not have sufficient funds to pay households cash dividends. These households instead were given promissory notes that had no purchasing power.

Peasants wanted more than two children not only to maximize their household's share of grain and private plots; children also provided security in old age. Unlike urbanites, Chinese peasants do not have a social security program that guarantees income upon retirement. They therefore must depend upon adult children to support them in old age. Only the peasants unfortunate enough to be childless are compelled to rely on the team's welfare system. But because daughters move from their natal family to their husband's household, according to the custom of patrilocal marriage, peasants think of security in old age in terms of having sons. Thus parents with only daughters typically continue to have children with the hopes of giving birth to a son. Or they try to "adopt" a son-in-law into their household, but generally only the more prosperous households can hope to find a young peasant man willing to become an adopted son-in-law.

The incentives for individual households to have more than two children have led to a rapid increase in the village population. The population doubled by 1980 from its base in 1950, while the arable land actually declined due to road construction and land occupied by new housing. As a result, though production of grain increased over the years, per capita food consumption remained at the same level and possibly declined. Despite the realization that population growth contributed to stagnation in per capita food consumption and worked as a

drag on further economic growth, it was not until the implementation of strict economic sanctions for additional children above the two-child norm that fertility began to decline rapidly, coming down to slightly over 1 percent, from over 2 percent prior to the implementation of a stricter government birth control policy. According to the new policy, households that did not comply with the birth control guidelines could not register additional births, and thus did not receive grain rations and private plots for children above the two-child limit. This effectively eliminated the economic incentives to have children under the collective farming system. However, it is likely that the return to household production will stimulate new pressures to have more than one or two children for peasant households that now feel the need for additional labor power. The optimal size of a peasant family for household production is above five, though over nine can result in inefficiencies.<sup>18</sup>

Another area where household maximizing behavior worked against collective interest involved the peasant men who ran deficit accounts in the team while they drew salaries from the state as cadres, workers, and government staff members. Because the households of state employees depended primarily on wives to earn workpoints to pay for household grain consumption, many customarily overdrew their team accounts. Rather than use a part of their salaries to pay off the overdraft accounts, some households of state employees preferred to defer payments until their children grew older and were able to pay back the team.

Lastly, a maximizing behavior characteristic of all households was to work at a slower pace on the collective fields. According to Yangbei peasants, the tendency for villagers to slow down in work for the collective sector was especially evident among women. There are a number of possible explanations for why women were apt to slow down while working for the collective economy. First, women married into the village, and, as strangers in the village, they were more likely to identify more narrowly with their husband's household rather than with the village as a whole. On the other hand, as a single-surname settlement, men, who unlike their wives were born and raised in the village, may have had a stronger identification with the team economy. Second, and more important, women in Yangbei had a longer work day than men. Not only did they work in the collective fields, but they also did most of the household chores. Caught in a "double bind," women's work in Yangbei was actually more strenuous, physically taxing, and required longer hours each day. It is not surprising that when she worked in the collective fields, a woman tried to conserve her energy

for her household chores. When the team leader worked nearby she might work faster, but when he was out of sight she often slowed down and might even squat briefly when others were not looking. When women worked together as a group, an activist might scold those who worked more slowly, but there was an understanding among women that all benefited from working at a slower pace in order to have the energy to do the tasks they must accomplish for their households later in the day. What is pertinent to the argument is that women slowed down in the collective sector in order to be able to work more efficiently for their own households.

In conclusion, as the above examples of maximizing behavior of Yangbei peasants illustrate, the persistence of peasant household individualism resulted in household strategies that gave priority to household interests over collective interests. Even when peasants realized that all would gain through effective and productive cooperation, due to the "free rider" effect, peasants nonetheless gave priority to household private-sector work because such work accrued directly to the household. Likewise, peasants were surprisingly subtle in their calculation of household utility maximization, as evident in their marketing activity and their calculation of benefits and costs of having children.

### **Collective Incentives and Group Pressure**

It has been argued that collective incentives ought to provide adequate incentives to motivate peasants to work hard for their collective economy. According to this argument, peasants realize that their individual interests are bound to the welfare and productivity of the collective economy. The workpoint system provides differential rewards for individual effort. The collective, especially in a small production team or work group, moreover, exercises social control to pressure slower members to maintain production norms. Nonmaterial incentives, rooted in political study and consciousness raising, provide additional reinforcement to reward meritorious work.<sup>19</sup>

Though the workpoint system was supposed to reward differential output and quality of work performance, as in Unger's village, the actual range of workpoint distribution assigned to team members was relatively narrow. In most teams, workpoints were fixed only once a year. Some teams in Yangbei fixed workpoints as infrequently as once every other year. Thus workpoints tended to be relatively stable once assigned and did not measure seasonal or short-term changes in individual productivity. Moreover, in assigning workpoints, a team



member's social status and seniority were taken into account in addition to the assessment of the quality of work input. Wives of brigade cadres, for example, were generally assigned higher workpoints, though they did not work harder than other women in the team. For these reasons the workpoint system at Yangbei tended not to be a very sensitive barometer of actual contribution on a day-to-day basis. However, the reforms introduced in 1979 and 1980 were supposed to tie collective incentives more closely to actual performance. But the rapid disintegration of collective farming shortly after the introduction of the reforms suggests that a more direct link between incentives and performance was not adequate to convince peasants of the viability of collective farming.

Nor was the problem rooted in an absence of effective social control over slackers or "free riders" in the team. As was evident in the group sanctions imposed on women who worked more slowly than others, the team did exert pressure on slackers to maintain production norms. Though occasionally a slacker might duck behind tall rice stems, or slow down when others were not looking, the greater part of a work day was spent working alongside other team members. Thus surveillance by team members of each other's actual work contribution was maintained. Moreover, a villager's social standing within the team, usually the size of a small hamlet or neighborhood in a hamlet, was to a large extent determined by his or her contribution to the team economy. In an informal reputation survey of team members, there was a close correspondence between a villager's social standing and the total workpoints earned in the course of a year. Hard work and skill were thus rewarded not simply through higher income from the collective sector, but also by higher social standing within the hamlet community. Similarly, those who contributed less, because they were seen as either lazy, slackers, or less competent, were typically those who were rated lowest among team members. These villagers were often the object of derisive teasing and contempt among fellow villagers.

American management studies have demonstrated that production norms can be and are maintained through group social pressure, especially in small work groups where face-to-face interaction is part of the work process.<sup>20</sup> But often there exists an informal understanding within the group to maintain production norms at a lower rate than what the work group could potentially sustain.<sup>21</sup> This was true of Yangbei women, as a means to resolve their "double bind" in favor of household work. Likewise, due to anxiety of "free riders" the stronger, more experienced, and more capable farmers, according to my informants,

did not contribute their best effort. They complained that though they received the highest workpoint assignments in the team, this still did not fully compensate them for the value of their contribution. According to my educated youth informants, these experienced and capable farmers were among the most discontented members of the team, since they continued to believe that they could do better if they were to farm on their own. Thus social control appeared successful in maintaining a bottom-line production norm, but it apparently did not succeed in overcoming the effect of peasant household individualism and the "free rider" dilemma.

### **History**

During my field work in the village there was a tendency to idealize life there following land reform and prior to collectivization. My informants in Ithaca had told me that peasants described this period as one of prosperity and well-being. In life history interviews conducted in Yangbei, peasants recalled that per mu grain yields before collectivization were as high as the best years under collective farming, but more importantly per capita grain consumption was never higher. By contrast, peasants associated the years when the state pressed for rural radicalism, the Great Leap Forward and the period of brigade accounting in the early 1970s, with the leanest years, when subsistence margins were at their lowest for peasant households. At the time of my field work in 1980, food consumption had recovered from the slump caused by the latter part of the Cultural Revolution. Per capita grain consumption rose from 333 jin (unhusked rice) in 1977 to 600 jin in 1978, and it dropped again to 500 jin in 1979. This was during the transition to household production, when eleven teams were divided into twenty-one smaller teams. Yangbei experimented with various forms of small-group responsibility systems at this time. Yet, older peasants maintained that per capita food consumption was still lower than it had been before the Great Leap Forward. A number of peasants complained that household grain stores were still somewhat low. Despite the improvement in grain production, peasants continued to believe that the early 1950s were the best years, when household grain stores, meat consumption, and wine supply were plentiful even following the traditional celebration of the spring holiday, a week-long period of feasting and relaxation. Without documentation of actual per capita food consumption during the early 1950s, it was difficult to assess to what extent peasant assertions of better times were in fact accurate. But whether

they were or not, Yangbei peasants believed that they were doing better when they farmed as individual households, and when cooperation was voluntary, as it was under the mutual aid teams from 1953 to 1955.

Collectivization swept through Yangbei in the winter of 1956. According to cadres who led the collectivization movement, Yangbei completed its transition to collective farming in a very rapid sequence of events. In a span of a few months, Yangbei moved from the large mutual aid teams directly to the higher level Agricultural Producer's Cooperative. Preparations were being made in the village in the spring of 1955 to establish lower level APCs, where land, draft animals, and farm implements were still legally owned by the household. But this first stage never got off the ground. Instead, during the winter slack season, cadres from the county government came to Yangbei, influenced by the national "socialist upsurge" mobilization, and pushed for setting up collectives at a faster pace than originally planned.

Though middle peasants, who had the most to lose in land, animals, and farm implements, were unhappy and reluctant to join, there was no active opposition to collectivization in Yangbei. According to life history interviews, peasants had enormous confidence in the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. This grew out of Yangbei's long association with the Maoist revolution, as an early guerrilla base area in the Fujian-Jiangxi base area. Former guerrilla fighters and cadres in Yangbei formed a ready core of leadership for the new cooperative. The combined prestige of the village party members and the county cadres apparently was sufficient to mobilize enthusiasm for collective farming.

The harvest following collectivization continued the string of good harvests of the early 1950s. This suggested that the transition from the mutual aid teams to full-scale collectivization, though extremely rapid, was nonetheless quite smooth and did not disrupt agricultural production. This was all the more striking in light of the difficulties experienced in mobilizing enthusiasm and support for village-wide brigade accounting in the 1970s, as the higher level APC was a village-wide organization that employed a form of brigade accounting. Enthusiasm for collective farming probably peaked during the first year of the Great Leap Forward, as peasant belief in the credibility of the party leadership came under extreme strain. Wuping county was a center of the so-called communist wind in the Great Leap. In Yangbei, peasants were mobilized to build backyard iron furnaces, and they melted down cooking ware and pots, set up mass cooking halls, farmed in militarized work units, and were deployed by the newly established people's

commune to build roadways far from the village. Although weather conditions were reported to be quite favorable, so many of the able-bodied peasants were drawn from agriculture to build roadways that not enough hands were left in the village during the critical planting and growing season.

The disruption caused to agricultural production by the Great Leap mobilization resulted in dramatically lower grain yields. Yet, the Xiangdong People's Commune reported unprecedented bumper harvests to the county government. It was on the basis of these exaggerated reports that the state quota for compulsory sales of grain was fixed. Before the mistake could be rectified, famine had already struck in Yangbei and Wuping county. During the difficult years after the failure of the Great Leap Forward, peasants received no support from the community or state to sustain them through the famine. The brigade had no savings or grain reserves. Peasants instead relied upon their own households to get them through these years. Reliance upon a household-based strategy for survival was reinforced by the state economic recovery policy, which permitted households to farm on their own under the household contract system and relaxed controls on the private sector and rural markets, the economic domain of the household economy after collectivization.

The failure of the Great Leap Forward was a shattering experience for Yangbei peasants, and it may have permanently colored their basic attitude toward radical forms of collective farming. It is impossible to know how long the enthusiasm—if it was as genuine as peasants recollected—that characterized the first years of collectivization could have been sustained had there not been such a massive failure. At any rate, the heroic period of collective farming in Yangbei, when peasants were willing to sacrifice household individualism for collectivist goals, proved short-lived.

### **Economy of Scale—Household Versus Collective Production**

Collectivization had two broad purposes: to bring about the rapid modernization of agriculture through insitutional development requiring a low rate of capital investment in agriculture, and to regularize the extraction of agricultural surpluses by the state to help finance socialist construction. It was predicated on the idea that the concentration of land and labor into larger units and the pooling of agricultural implements and draft animals would allow for fuller utilization of underutilized resources. It was thought that as a result, the productive

forces suppressed under traditional arrangements could be fully unleashed, and economic growth accelerated. In reality, collectivization imposed large-scale organization on a small-scale economy. In Yangbei, there was a limit to efforts to concentrate the size of land plots due to topographical conditions of a mountainous area. Though less fragmented than before collectivization, the cultivable land was still divided into relatively small parcels, with larger plots in the alluvial valley, smaller plots on terraced land in the surrounding hills, and tiny plots scattered along mountainsides farther from the village settlement. Farmers continued to rely upon draft animals and labor-intensive means of cultivation. Even the widespread introduction of walking tractors in the mid-1970s did not change the labor-intensive cultivation that characterized rice agriculture in South China.

Whether economies of scale can be achieved by concentrating labor into larger production units in rice agriculture is still an open question. Concentration of labor may facilitate the mobilization of labor for infrastructure construction, such as roads, public buildings, and irrigation systems, but it is not clear that it actually leads to greater efficiency in wetland rice agriculture. As Fei Xiaotong wrote, "when work is mainly done by hands and feet, the advantage of division of work is reduced. Extensive organization in such enterprises gives no appreciable profit but rather complicates human relations."<sup>22</sup> In Yangbei, it was certainly evident that private plots were far more productive per area unit than were the collective fields. Economies of scale in agriculture are very limited, according to agricultural economist Alan Richards. "Even in heavily mechanized California, most economies of scale in irrigated field crops are achieved with farms of less than 200 acres. For relatively unmechanized peasant agriculture, there are few, if any, economies of scale."<sup>23</sup>

On the other hand, if peasant recollections of the larger household grain surplus of the early 1950s are accurate, collectivization probably resulted in a more effective system for extracting agricultural surpluses from the village through taxation and compulsory grain sales. Indeed, if there was one issue on which all Yangbei peasants could unite, it was in the various schemes to reduce the actual amount of grain the village must sell each year to the state. The quota for compulsory sales of grain restricted peasant grain consumption to levels closer to subsistence margins than peasants would have if they were not indirectly taxed through compulsory sales. Quotas also prevented peasants from setting aside land to grow cash crops that are more profitable than grain.

The reforms introduced in 1978 helped to establish more effective

collective incentives based upon actual performance and reduced the size of production teams. These measures contributed to higher per mu grain yields and per capita food consumption.<sup>24</sup> The assumption guiding the 1978 reforms was most clearly articulated by Yangbei's party secretary. He remarked to me one day in explaining the reforms, "because of the long tradition of individual household production, the closer we can approximate individual household production, while still maintaining the collective system of ownership, the higher the productivity we can expect to achieve." Given this assumption, I asked why Yangbei did not adopt the household contract system of the early 1960s, which allowed for household cultivation within the framework of collective ownership.

Team cadres explained to me that only the team could purchase chemical fertilizer, insecticides, and walking tractors, whereas individuals could not. Moreover, only the teams qualified for the low-interest credit extended by the state to purchase these modern inputs. They also pointed out the problem of using team-owned equipment and assets if individual household production were adopted. It would be a difficult and divisive process to decide who could, for example, be the first to use the team's walking tractor or oxen. Also, it was pointed out to me that households that were short on labor power and skilled farmers with sufficient breadth of experience to handle the entire cycle of agricultural production, such as female-headed households or households of cadres and workers who did off-farm work, would experience difficulty in adjusting to household production.

Still unsure of the permanency of the new pragmatic drift of state policy toward smaller units of production, more leeway for market forces, and more scope for material incentives, many peasants probably were too cautious to be assertively vocal about their preference for household production. In retrospect the party secretary's assessment of what it would take to unleash productivity reflected a keen appreciation for the strength of peasant preference for household production. Though I continued to ask questions to probe more into the reasons why some families wanted to return to household production, I never actually was able to interview peasants who freely discussed this conviction. But I could infer from statements made to me by some of these peasants—perhaps the older peasants who emphasized the belief that things were much better in the early 1950s, or those who told me that despite recent improvements, life was still difficult, food stores low, and diet barely adequate. These peasants were telling me indirectly that they lacked confidence in the collective farming system

and preferred the period of the early 1950s when farming was done according to individual households. Moreover, my informants in Ithaca had told me repeatedly that they were absolutely sure, on the basis of their knowledge of peasant attitudes, that Yangbei peasants wanted very much to return to household production. They claimed that few were willing to voice such views in the 1970s publicly, but in smaller circles of close friends, they talked more openly about their disillusionment with collective farming. My informants told me that all of the older peasants were still very clear about the boundaries of the land they farmed before collectivization, and they even enjoyed joking about this in public when peasants worked together in work groups.

In fact, my informants repeated claims about peasant preference for household farming were one of the primary reasons I felt it was necessary to go to Yangbei myself to conduct my own independent field work. I believed that my informants' statements of peasant preference for household farming reflected bias against collective farming. It is only with some humility that I confess now that my initial rejection of my informants' claims and evidence of household individualism reflected my own preconceptions. I had imagined early in my study that I would discover in a detailed ethnographic account the strength of communal bonds, first stemming from the natural bonds of a single-surname village and then being reinforced by two decades of collective farming. I anticipated finding a rich variety of informal institutions reflecting deeply ingrained cooperative behavior among peasants. In a sense, I very much wanted to find this, since my own preference was to discover that cooperative farming had deep roots in Chinese villages. Thus, even though my field work in Yangbei turned up sufficient evidence to confirm the claims of my informants in Ithaca, I still clung to my belief that somehow collectivized farming would persist through the reforms. A more perceptive view would have been to interpret the reforms, and the subtle statements from cadres and peasants pointing to the existence of preference for household farming, as a transitional stage in the dismantling of collective farming.

### **Division of Labor**

Despite changes in the technology of rice agriculture—the use of walking tractors, the improvement of seeds, and the utilization of chemical fertilizer and insecticides—the simple fact remained that the division of labor contained in a peasant household was still adequate for handling the entire cycle of agricultural production. This is especially the case in

areas where the per capita size of land is small, resulting in an excess of labor power for agriculture. In Yangbei, most households contained an adequate division of labor to farm on their own. The median household size in the four production teams where I conducted household surveys was six members, with two labor power per household. Per capita arable land in Yangbei was about 1.4 mu, high for China, and much higher than along the coastal farming areas in Fujian. Yet, a 9-mu farm for a household of six to eight members was quite manageable within the context of the household division of labor. Female-headed households, households with low laborer/dependent ratios, and households where a husband lived away from home as state cadre, PLA soldier, or worker might be expected to have difficulties in farming alone. They probably would have continued to benefit from collective farming, especially since these households were more highly represented among the households with overdraft accounts. But these households constituted a minority of Yangbei households. I learned through interviews that the households that were discontented with collective farming tended to be those that had favorable laborer/dependent ratios and were headed by experienced and highly capable peasants. For these households, strong in labor power and led by skilled farmers, the belief that they could do better farming alone was quite strong, according to my informants. These households might be expected to take the lead when the opportunity arose to push strongly for individual household production, as they were among the most influential in their teams. But without knowing the precise events that led to the final break-up of collective farming in Yangbei in 1981, it is difficult to say what coalition of households pushed for a return to household farming, and which households opposed this, if there were any that did so actively. But recent field work conducted after the breakdown of collective farming, in villages that share similar conditions as Yangbei, emphasizes the view that there was a virtual upsurge from below in favor of individual household farming, once the state gave its approval.

If the analysis of the breakdown of collective farming in Yangbei is valid, in other areas in China where the peasant household is an adequate production unit it might be expected that peasants have already reverted to household farming of some form, or would prefer to do so. This would be especially true of areas where per capita arable land is small and there exists a surplus of agricultural labor power; in poorer, more backward areas, where agricultural mechanization has been slow to develop; areas with a tradition of peasant entrepreneurship and developed household sidelines; and also villages where collective



farming never achieved levels of efficiency and productivity adequate to convince peasants that their basic interests were tied to the collective, more so than even their own households.

In the areas of China's countryside where the division of labor has developed to the point that households are no longer adequate as production units, however, peasants might be expected still to prefer collective farming over individual household production. The following areas are likely to have characteristics favorable to collective farming: those situated in rich agricultural areas close to urban centers where a part of the male labor force has been drawn away from agriculture by industry or construction projects; areas along major transportation systems that allow for easy access to urban markets, and where collective sideline industries are well developed and profitable; model and successful brigades that have a long history of success at collective farming, and which may receive subsidies and special inputs from the state based upon continued success in collective farming; or a combination of these circumstances which result in the development of the division of labor to the point that households can no longer function as adequate production units, or where peasants no longer depend upon their households for basic economic needs.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has analyzed the sources of peasant preference for individual household production in Yangbei. As Theodore Schultz has written, "Much of our trouble in understanding agriculture in poor countries arises from misconceptions of the preferences of the people concerned and of the role of preferences in economic behavior."<sup>25</sup> In my analysis of the sources of peasant preferences, I have taken an "economic approach," which assumes that Chinese peasants respond to incentive structures as people do elsewhere in the world. Surprisingly, this point has often been overlooked in past analyses of the performance of Chinese agriculture and by the past policies of the Chinese government. Despite the growth of welfare services in collective agriculture, peasants still must rely upon their households for basic security and well-being. For this reason they are likely to identify their interests with those of their household, and subordinate individualistic behavior to allow the household to function efficiently as an economic unit. Within the collective economy, each household seeks to maximize the utility it derives from participating in it, as well as from the private sector that exists alongside the collective sector, and in competition with it. Hence, peasants are more likely to prefer household goals than indi-

vidualistic and community goals (hypothesis 1). Peasant calculations of household utility maximization are quite subtle, often revealing a sophisticated investment logic, and are frequently at the cost of collective goals and interests. This becomes apparent when the household calculation of optimum gains conflicts with collective goals, such as in the case of birth control. In a sense each household is engaged in a zero-sum game in which the advantages it obtains for itself through household individualistic behavior are at the cost of other households in the same team. Yet, the fear of losing material utility to "free riders" tends to reinforce household individualism, lest the household lose out, as do those, for example, that fail to have children, and thereby risk not getting paid for surplus workpoints or having to purchase expensive grain on the free market.

The ability of the household to subordinate individualistic behavior to its function as an economic unit and the habit of maximizing household utility even for very marginal gains render the household a highly efficient production unit. As the party secretary observed, "the closer we can approximate individual household production while still maintaining the collective system of ownership, the higher the productivity we can expect to achieve." Because of the past mistakes and inefficiencies experienced in the collective sector, brigade and team farming failed to demonstrate to peasants that they were superior to what was achieved in individual household farming prior to collectivization. More importantly, as long as households continue to be adequate production units, capable of handling the full cycle of agricultural production, peasants are likely to prefer individual household production to collective forms of production (hypothesis 2). By farming alone, peasants gain the satisfaction that all of their work directly benefits their own household, whereas a persistent fear in collective farming was that by working harder than others they benefited their own household only indirectly, while supporting "free riders" who worked less hard or were less skilled as farmers.

An underlying implication of this argument is that Chinese peasants are willing to forsake the security provided by collective farming when given the opportunity to choose individual household production. However, in households that lack confidence in their capability as a sufficient production unit, and in richer, more developed localities where the division of labor has developed to the point that households cannot function as adequate production units, peasants are likely to prefer and sustain cooperative farming without the imposition of state power.<sup>26</sup>

## Notes

1. Benedict Stavis, *People's Communes and Rural Development in China* (Ithaca: Rural Development Committee, 1977); Kenneth Walker, *Planning in Chinese Agriculture*, (Chicago: Aldine, 1967); and Byung-joon Ahn, "The Political Economy of the People's Commune in China: Changes and Continuities," *Journal of Asian Studies* 34 (1975):631-58.
2. William L. Parish, "Socialism and the Chinese Peasant Family," *Journal of Asian Studies* 34 (1975):613-30.
3. See for example, William L. Parish and Martin King Whyte, *Village and Family in Contemporary China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).
4. James Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976). The view that peasants are risk averse is widespread in the literature.
5. Samuel L. Popkin, *The Rational Peasant* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).
6. Theodore Schultz, *Transforming Traditional Agriculture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964); see also Gary S. Becker, *The Economic Approach to Human Behavior* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).
7. William W. Murdoch, *The Poverty of Nations: The Political Economy of Hunger and Population* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980) pp. 95-165.
8. Dennis L. Chinn, "Land Utilization and Productivity in Prewar Chinese Agriculture: Preconditions for Collectivization," *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* 59:559-64.
9. R. Albert Berry and William R. Cline, *Agrarian Structure and Productivity in Developing Countries* (Johns Hopkins University Press for the I.L.O., 1979), p. 194. I am grateful to Alan Richards, Department of Economics, University of California at Santa Cruz, for providing me with this reference.
10. George C. Homans, *The Nature of Social Sciences* (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1967), p. 22.
11. Since this chapter was written in July 1981, the household mode of production has become dominant in the Chinese countryside. Implementation of the household responsibility system grew into a nationwide campaign, and in some areas it was virtually imposed on peasants, often against the opposition of brigade cadres. We still do not have systematic data on why in some areas peasants welcomed the household responsibility system and in other areas there was opposition.
12. Parish, "Chinese Family Under Socialism."
13. Theda Skopol, *States and Social Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 147-54; and Fei Hsiao-t'ung, "Peasantry and Gentry: An Interpretation of Chinese Social Structure and Its Changes," *American Journal of Sociology* 52, 1 (1946):1-17.
14. See Margery Wolf, *The House of Lim* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968).
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16. See George Casper Homans, *Social Behavior: Its Elementary Forms* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1961).
17. Gary S. Becker, *A Treatise on the Family* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); Theodore Schultz, *Economics of the Family: Marriage, Children, and Human Capital* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975); and John Caldwell, "The Economic Rationality of High Fertility: An Investigation Illustrated with Nigerian Survey Data," *Population Studies* 31 (1977):9.
18. William Murdoch, *The Poverty of Nations*, pp. 140-51.
19. See Carl Riskin, "Maoism and Motivation: Work Incentives in China," in

*China's Uninterrupted Revolution*, ed. Victor Nee and James Peck (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975), pp.415-62; Dennis L. Chinn, "Diligence and Laxness in Chinese Agricultural Production Teams," *Journal of Development Economics* 7 (1980):331-44; and Dennis L. Chinn, "Team Cohesion and Collective Labor Supply in Chinese Agriculture," *Journal of Comparative Economics* 3 (1979):375-94.

20. Fritz J. Roethlisberger and William J. Dickson, *Management and the Worker*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939); George Casper Homans, *The Human Group* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1950).

21. Homans, *Social Behavior*, pp. 48-154.

22. Fei Hsiao-t'ung, "Peasantry and Gentry," p. 14.

23. Personal communication from Alan Richards, February 23, 1982.

24. See Victor Nee, "Post-Mao Changes in a South China Production Brigade," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 13 (1981):32-40.

25. Theodore Schultz, *Transforming Traditional Agriculture*, p. 28

26. In many areas cooperatives have been formed, owned, and run by small groups of three to five households. These new cooperatives may become a popular form of joint-investment vehicles for peasants to go beyond the limitations of household production. They appear to be small business enterprises in which capital and labor is pooled for greater productivity and profits. Whether such corporate economic units will be allowed to develop in scale and importance is still uncertain. See *Renmin ribao*, January 20, 1984, p.2.