

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

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

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI

A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

Make a living:
Agriculture, industry and commerce in Eastern Hebei, 1870-1937

by

Fuming Wang

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Agricultural History and Rural Studies

Major Professor: Adrian A. Bennett

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

1998

Copyright © Fuming Wang, 1998, All rights reserved

UMI Number: 9826580

Copyright 1998 by
Wang, Fuming

All rights reserved.

UMI Microform 9826580
Copyright 1998, by UMI Company. All rights reserved.

This microform edition is protected against unauthorized
copying under Title 17, United States Code.

UMI
300 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

**Graduate College
Iowa State University**

**This is to certify that the Doctoral dissertation of
Fuming Wang
has met the dissertation requirements of Iowa State University**

Signature was redacted for privacy.

Major Professor

Signature was redacted for privacy.

For the Major Program

Signature was redacted for privacy.

For the Graduate College

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	v
LIST OF TABLES	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	xi
ABSTRACT	xiii
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION	1
Fei Xiaotong's interpretation of Chinese peasant economy	2
Past scholarship	5
Research area and the basic sources	12
A few words about the time frame and the thesis organization	17
CHAPTER 2. THE ECOSYSTEM OF EASTERN HEBEI: ITS GEOGRAPHY, CLIMATE AND POPULATION	19
The location of Eastern Hebei	20
The problem of bannerland	23
The soil condition and climate in Eastern Hebei	31
Population and total grain production: A supply and demand analysis	37
Cash crop planting in Eastern Hebei	45
CHAPTER 3. LITTLE RETURN FROM THE LAND: INVOLUTION OF AGRICULTURE	55
Land distribution and tenancy in Eastern Hebei	56
Few working animals and simple farming tools in Eastern Hebei	69
Agricultural calendar and labor supply	74
Agricultural production: A cost and return analysis	79
CHAPTER 4. SUPPORTING AGRICULTURE WITH SIDELINE PRODUCTION: THE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL INDUSTRY	90
Sidelines of agricultural production: Domestic animal raising, fruit production, fishing, and grain processing	90
Local resources and local industries: Reed weaving, basket and paper making	102
Seizing the opportunity: Straw braiding and bristle processing	109
From sideline to main production: Handicraft weaving in Baodi area	115

CHAPTER 5. LOOKING BEYOND THE VILLAGE: WORKING IN THE CITIES OR GOING TO MANCHURIA	129
The improvement of transportation and the rise of the new industrial cities	129
Finding jobs in the cities: Peasant workers in Beijing, Tianjin and other market towns	136
Going to Manchuria and the rise of the merchant-landlord class	149
CHAPTER 6. IT IS HARDER TO MAKE A LIVING: STATE INVOLUTION, IMPERIALISM AND PEASANTS' LIVELIHOOD IN THE 1930S	170
State involution and increasing taxation	170
Civil war, banditry and peasant losses	182
The door is closed: The arrival of the Japanese	187
Word economic depression and Eastern Hebei economy	198
Peasants' livelihood in the 1930s: An analysis of peasants' budget	206
CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION	216
Make a living by all means	216
Re-evaluating feudalism and imperialism	218
Rural industrialization and peasants' livelihood	221
BIBLIOGRAPHY	225

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1-1. Philip Huang's research area and the Mantetsu-surveyed villages	14
Figure 2-1. Counties in Eastern Hebei	21
Figure 2-2. Topography of Eastern Hebei	33
Figure 2-3. Monthly average rainfall in Tianjin (1891-1925)	34
Figure 2-4. Rainfall in June in Tianjin (1891-1925)	35
Figure 3-1. Equal division of land in the Zhang clan in Dabeiguan village, Pinggu county	62
Figure 3-2. Labor-days distribution in Michang village, Fengrun county	77
Figure 4-1. Map showing often flooded areas and distribution of cotton handlooms in Baodi county	119
Figure 4-2. Map showing trade routes for Baodi fabrics	120
Figure 5-1. Railroad, canal and cities in Eastern Hebei	132

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2-1.	Mu of bannerland in Eastern Hebei	24
Table 2-2.	Bannerland and its percentage in Ji and Fengrun counties	25
Table 2-3.	Land taxes and rents in Shunyi county, 1930s	30
Table 2-4.	Land and population in Eastern Hebei, 1937	38
Table 2-5.	Percentage of households according to occupational division, 1936	39
Table 2-6.	Percentage of main crops planted in Eastern Hebei, 1939	41
Table 2-7.	Grain production, consumption and shortage in Eastern Hebei, 1938-39	42
Table 2-8.	Percentage of main crops in six Eastern Hebei villages, 1936	43
Table 2-9.	Grain production and per-capita share in seven Eastern Hebei villages, 1936	44
Table 2-10.	Mu of cotton land and its percentage in total cultivable land in Eastern Hebei, 1936	48
Table 2-11.	Cotton planting and yields in Fengrun county, 1930-1935	49
Table 2-12.	Percentage of different crops in seven villages in Yutian county	50
Table 3-1.	Percentage of households according to landownership in four Eastern Hebei counties, 1930s	56
Table 3-2.	Percentage of owners, tenant and part-tenant, and year-laborers in twenty Eastern Hebei villages, 1930s and early 1940s	58
Table 3-3.	Percentage of households according to land holding in Eastern Hebei villages, 1936	59
Table 3-4.	Percentage of landholding according to how much land they held in Eastern Hebei villages, 1936	60

Table 3-5.	Land buying by Liu Lihetang, 1880-1922	64
Table 3-6.	Average landholding per household and percentage of owner-peasants in three generations in Dabeiguan village	65
Table 3-7.	Percentage of households and land farmed according to the size of farms	67
Table 3-8.	Households and working animals in nine Eastern Hebei villages, 1935-1936	69
Table 3-9.	Domestic animal raising in the farming households in Xiaoying village, 1936	70
Table 3-10.	Cost of working animal raising in Xiaoying village, 1936	71
Table 3-11.	Planting and harvesting schedules in Miyun and Linyu counties, 1930s	75
Table 3-12.	Labor-day needed to farm on 4 mu of land in Fengrun and Luan counties, 1930s	76
Table 3-13.	Farming cost and income in Michang village, 1937	80
Table 3-14.	Agricultural income and family budget in Xiaojie village, 1935	81
Table 3-15.	Farming cost in Michang village, 1937	82
Table 3-16.	Percentage of fertilizer, hired-labor, rent and taxes in farming cost in Michang village, 1937	82
Table 3-17.	Net farming income after deducting "family-labor-cost" in Michang village, 1937	83
Table 3-18.	Adjusted agricultural income and family budget in Xiaojie village, 1935	85
Table 3-19.	Average net agricultural income for 11 households in Xiaojie, 1935	86
Table 3-20.	Average returns of agricultural investment in Michang, 1937	86

Table 3-21. Farming return for owner-peasant in Xiaojie village, 1935	87
Table 3-22. Tenant farming returns in Michang, 1937	88
Table 4-1. Farm size and domestic animal raising in Lujiazhai and Xiaojie, 1930s	91
Table 4-2. Number of pigs transported to the cities by railway, 1934	94
Table 4-3. Estimated fruit production in three counties, 1934	95
Table 4-4. Fruit production in Zhongliangshan, Changli county, 1936	96
Table 4-5. Dried and fresh fruits exported from Eastern Hebei, 1934	96
Table 4-6. Fishing households and harvests along the Pohai Bay, 1934	97
Table 4-7. Oil-pressing industry in some Eastern Hebei counties, 1934	99
Table 4-8. Reed mats woven in some Eastern Hebei counties, 1934	103
Table 4-9. Basket making and exporting in Eastern Hebei, 1934	105
Table 4-10. Mulberry twigs exported from Qian-an to Manchuria, 1930s	106
Table 4-11. Quantity and value of paper exporting from Qian-an to Manchuria	109
Table 4-12. Straw braid exported from Tianjin, 1900-1909	111
Table 4-13. Quantity and value of bristle exported from Tianjin, 1900-1909	114
Table 4-14. Distribution of Baodi cotton cloth by provinces, 1923	121
Table 4-15. Amount of cloth woven and wages earned in Baodi county, 1923	122
Table 4-16. Cotton yarn consumed and cloth woven in Baodi, 1923-1933	123
Table 4-17. Land-holding and cloth-weaving in Longwo and other six villages in Yutian county	124
Table 4-18. Land utilization and farming income in Baodi, 1933	126

Table 5-1.	Non-farming engagements in Shajing village, 1941	141
Table 5-2.	Grain production and consumption for 17 households in Shajing village, 1941	142
Table 5-3.	Household budget for 17 households in Shajing village, 1941	143
Table 5-4.	Non-farming engagement and income for 90 households in Xiaojie village, 1935	145
Table 5-5.	Non-farming occupations and incomes for 19 households in Xiaojie village, 1935	145
Table 5-6.	Occupations engaged by adult males in Baodi county, 1935	147
Table 5-7.	Emigrants from Eastern Hebei to Manchuria, April to December, 1935	152
Table 5-8.	Land distribution in Sangyuan village, Leting county, 1936	166
Table 5-9.	Grain production and consumption for the 11 sample households in Houjiaying, 1942	168
Table 6-1.	Land taxes in Sanhe county in 1935	171
Table 6-2.	Real incomes and expenditures of Hebei Province and yearly percentage change, 1913-1934	173
Table 6-3.	Real income of Hebei Province and yearly percentage change, 1916-1934	174
Table 6-4.	Distribution of income sources in Qinghai county, 1928-1933	175
Table 6-5.	Distribution of expenditure in Qinghai county, 1919-1933	177
Table 6-6.	Village income and expenditure in Xiaoying, Miyun county, 1934-35	179
Table 6-7.	Village expenditure in Lujiazhai, Zunhua county, 1934-35	179
Table 6-8.	War and banditry related losses in Lujiazhai, 1924-1933	183

Table 6-9. Volume of cloth sold in principal market areas for Baodi cloth, 1923 and 1933	190
Table 6-10. Qian-an paper exported to Manchuria, 1931-35	191
Table 6-11. Values of goods smuggled in Eastern Hebei by sea route, 1933-34	194
Table 6-12. Passenger numbers and freight tonnage in Shanhaiguan section, Beining Railway, 1932-1934	197
Table 6-13. Prices for grains, cloth and year-laborer in Ji county, 1912-1937	203
Table 6-14. Grain prices in Ji county, 1928-1936	204
Table 6-15. Grain prices in Ninghe county, 1927 and 1933	204
Table 6-16. Prices for agricultural products in Tong county, 1925-1935	205
Table 6-17. Income and expenditures for the 11 sample households in Xiaojie, 1935	207
Table 6-18. Income and expenditures for the 18 investigated households in Michang, 1938	208
Table 6-19. Cash expenditure in Dabeiguan, Pinggu county, 1936	209
Table 6-20. Debtors in Xiaojie village, 1935	211
Table 6-21. Money borrowing in Dabeiguan	211
Table 6-22. Cash income and expenditure in Lujiashai, 1935	212
Table 6-23. Money borrowing in Western part of Lujiashai, 1936	213

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation originates from a short paper titled “Going to Manchuria: A Case Study of Houjiaying Village, Hebei Province” which I presented at the 44th annual meeting of Midwest Conference on Asian Affairs (St. Louis, Missouri, October 1995). From the very beginning, the many tough questions proposed by my major professor, Dr. Adrian A. Bennett, inspired me to study the full nature of the peasant economy and to describe in particular how the peasants in Eastern Hebei made a living in pre-liberation China. In the reading of my drafts, Dr. Bennett not only corrected my English but rigorously reviewed my arguments. It is my honor to thank Dr. Bennett not only for arranging a research fellowship allowing me to pursue my advanced studies at Iowa State University but also for his encouragement and guidance especially in the writing of this dissertation.

In the research period, the Sun Yatsen Culture and Education Foundation provided a scholarship which allowed me to return to China to collect the basic material for this dissertation. A Center for East Asian Studies at the University of Chicago travel grant made it possible for me to use the collections in the East Asian Library at the Regenstein Library. The librarians there were very helpful in locating the rare books and newspapers in microfilms. Ms. Nakagawa Haruko helped me to romanize some Japanese names and book titles. To the above organizations and individuals, I express my sincere thanks.

Finally, I want to thank my wife and son. Without their love and support, I would never have finished this dissertation.

ABSTRACT

The existing scholarship on Chinese agricultural history and peasant economy always portrayed Chinese peasants as cultivators and equated agricultural commercialization as cash crop growing. Based on the field surveys made by the Chinese and Japanese investigators in the 1930s, this dissertation tries to correct the over-simplification of the Chinese peasant economy and describe how the peasants in Eastern Hebei made a living by a combination of agriculture, industry and commerce.

By examining the ecosystem and calculating the grain production and consumption, it is found that the returns from farming were not even enough for the peasants own consumption. Eastern Hebei was a grain shortage area and the peasants there had to engage in non-farming activities to supplement their income and support their families. Besides engaging in traditional sideline production, the peasants in Eastern Hebei took the opportunities provided by the development of domestic and international trade and produced on a large scale for outside markets. The bristle processing in Fengrun county, paper making in Qian-an county and handicraft weaving in Baodi county are selected to show the importance of rural industry in the peasant economy in Eastern Hebei.

This study also finds that in the modern period, either forced by survival pressure or attracted by outside opportunity, more and more peasants in Eastern Hebei left their villages and found temporary or permanent jobs in the outside world. The

causes and consequences of the large scale emigrating—“going to Manchuria”—are discussed in detail to show the importance of non-farming income in the peasant economy.

The 1930s witnessed increases in state taxation, the civil war, the Japanese invasion and the world economic depression. These developments are discussed in terms of impact upon the peasants of the villages under consideration. It is found that it was harder for the peasants to make a living in that period. In conclusion, this study supports Fei Xiaotong’s argument that it was impossible for Chinese peasants to make a living on farming alone and the final solution for China’s agrarian problem was diffused rural industrialization.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

In 1938, in the preface to Fei Xiaotong's book *Peasant Life in China*, the prominent anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski foretold that Fei's book "will be counted as a landmark in the development of anthropological field-work and theory."¹ In the following years, the book was reprinted four times and became a classic in the study of Chinese rural life.² It was immediately translated into Japanese, but no Chinese edition was published during the war. In the 1940s, although Fei Xiaotong was famous among the Chinese academic world, especially among the students of anthropology and sociology, few economists and policy makers paid attention to his field study and policy recommendations. In the three decades from 1950 to 1980, the discipline of sociology was abolished and the discipline of anthropology was restricted to "national minorities' research" in China. Fei's work was little known by the new generation of Chinese and he was criticized as a "rightist." But Western scholars who studied China did not forget Fei Xiaotong and his works. In 1970, Ramon Myers listed Fei's study as representative of one of the theories on Chinese agrarian problems.³ In 1981, R. David Arkush published a biography of Fei Xiaotong which faithfully recorded

¹ Bronislaw Malinowski, preface to *Peasant Life in China: A Field Study of Country Life in the Yangtze Valley*, by Hsiao-tung Fei (the new spelling is Fei Xiaotong) (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1939, fifth impression in 1962), xiii. About Fei Xiaotong and his works, see R. David Arkush, *Fei Xiaotong and Sociology in Revolutionary China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

² *Peasant Life in China* was first published in 1939, then reprinted in 1943, 1945, 1947 and 1962. It might have been printed more if Fei did not interfere. According to Arkush, in 1963, Fei wrote to the London publishers and asked them not to reprint his book and they agreed. Arkush, *Fei Xiaotong*, 277.

³ Ramon H. Myers, *The Chinese Peasant Economy: Agricultural Development in Hopei and Shantung, 1890-1949* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 18-19.

Fei's work and carefully evaluated his contribution to the understanding of Chinese peasants. After 1980, as Fei re-emerged in the academic world and became one of the high leaders in China, his "rural industrialization" and "small town development theory" became popular in and outside of China. Because sociologists and economists usually focus their attention on contemporary problems, it becomes the historian's responsibility to evaluate and test Fei's early findings and proposals. By pursuing a case study of Eastern Hebei (the definition of Eastern Hebei will be explained in chapter 2), this study will support Fei's argument on the importance of sideline and rural industrial production in the Chinese peasant economy. As Fei's field study had already opened a window for outsiders to understand the Chinese peasants in the 1930s, this thesis aims to enlarge this window by focusing on another part of China and hopes to answer a question proposed by Fei more than fifty years ago: how did the villagers in interior China live on the land?⁴

Fei Xiaotong's interpretation of Chinese peasant economy

In the preface to Fei Xiaotong's later works, Tang Tsou provided an excellent summary concerning Fei's interpretation of the Chinese peasant economy and recommendations for the treatment of the agrarian problems expressed in Fei's two books. As the summary is comprehensive, it is worth to quoting it here.

Fei Hsiao-tung's *Peasant Life in China* (E. P. Dutton, 1939) is now a classic in the study of Chinese rural life. In this field study of Kaihsienkung (Kaixian'gong), a village

⁴ About the question, see Hsiao-tung Fei, *Earthbound China: A Study of Rural Economy in Yunnan*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945), 297.

in his native Wujiang county, Jiangsu province, he developed the theme that, due to a huge population and the scarcity of cultivable land, Chinese peasants derived a substantial part of their income from household sideline and handicraft industries. When these declined for one reason or another, the peasants' standard of living declined as well; some sold their land and left for the cities.

Fei supported a "reasonable and effective land reform" (p.286). He noted that a "reduction of rent and equalization of ownership" would provide "breathing space for the peasants" (p.285). But he underscored his belief that the final solution had to be sought in the revival and development of household sideline and rural industries; e.g., the breeding of silkworms, the production of cocoons, the reeling of silk threads, and the selling of raw silk. A further step would be "the development of small-scale factories on the principle of cooperation" (p.286), in order to process agricultural produce or to make other products with locally available raw materials.

These basic ideas and policy recommendations, formulated fifty years ago, have remained with Fei. In *Earthbound China* (University of Chicago Press, 1945), he and Chih-I Chang surveyed three villages representing different degrees of commercial evolution and varying distances from large urban centers in the relatively underdeveloped southwestern province of Yunnan. In this book, Fei confirmed his earlier analysis of rural needs while developing the nuances in his detailed description of the socioeconomic life of these three villages. He was even more specific in advocating a return to the traditional principle of supplementing the family income of the peasants with a "diffused industry" (p.308); i.e., handicraft industries, small-scale rural cooperative factories, and workshops making machine parts. These decentralized workshops and factories would be "established in villages or in centers near villages" (p.309). Such development would enable the peasants to share in the profits of China's industrialization and at the same time prevent the concentration of population in urban centers (p.311).⁵

As R. David Arkush pointed out, Fei Xiaotong was not the first or the only one who stressed the importance of rural industry in peasants' life at that time.⁶ But undoubtedly, Fei's promotion of rural industry has been the most enduring effort in twentieth century China. Because Fei's arguments were based on his own and his students' field studies, his findings impressed readers immediately and few people doubted the reliability of his descriptions. But not all scholars agreed with his

⁵ Tang Tsou, forward to *Rural Development in China: Prospect and Retrospect* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) vii-viii.

⁶ Arkush, *Fei Xiaotong*, 170.

interpretation of the rural problems.⁷ Besides his occasional miscalculations,⁸ one often asked question was “what is the value of studies of small communities [four isolated villages in the two books], no matter how reliable, for a complex society such as China’s?”⁹ In other words, is Fei’s finding representative of the whole peasant economy in China or is it only a particular phenomena in some southern villages. Another problem was the weakness of historical evidence to support some of Fei’s conclusions. Arkush pointed out that “interestingly enough, the weakness of Fei’s generalizations I think stemmed from his commitment to field work instead of long hours in the library.”¹⁰ Besides a personal bias towards contemporary rural economic studies, the unavailability of books and libraries in China during the war and the fact that his books were finally written or translated in England or the United States, help to explain the lack of library research. However, almost at the same time that Fei did his field studies in southeast and southwest China, Japanese researchers conducted similar investigations in north China. But the Japanese never published any comprehensive studies at that time and their investigation reports will be the basic materials for this study.

⁷ Jack M. Potter, *Capitalism and the Chinese Peasant: Social and Economic Change in a Hong Kong Village* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968). See Chapter 7.

⁸ Arkush cited and annotated some miscalculations in one part of Fei’s book. See *Fei Xiaotong*, 86.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 92.

Past scholarship

In China, the 1950s was a prosperous and highly productive decade for social scientists. Under the coordination of the Institute of Economics, Academia Sinica (now, the Institute of Economics is under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences), three series of multi-volumes source materials on the Chinese modern economy were edited and published. The agricultural volumes were edited by Li Wenzhi and Zhang Youyi.¹¹ These three volumes were not a simple collection of historical materials on agriculture. The selection of the materials and the detailed subtitles reflected the editors' opinions on the development of modern Chinese agriculture. As David Faure pointed out, by selecting the materials, the editors wanted to demonstrate that modern Chinese agriculture was a history in the decline of production and the deterioration of Chinese peasants' life. Commercialization and foreign invasion were two important causes for this situation.¹² The Anti-Rightist Movement of the late 1950s and the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s interrupted scientific research and there was no real academic book on economic history published during the 1960s and the 1970s. From 1980 on, research work has been restarted and two books on north China villages have

¹¹ Li Wenzhi, ed., *Zhongguo jindai nongyeshi ziliao* (Source Materials on the Agricultural History of Modern China, vol. 1: 1840-1911) (Beijing: Sanlian, 1957); Zhang Youyi, ed., *Zhongguo jindai nongyeshi ziliao* (Source Materials on the Agricultural History of Modern China, vol. 2: 1912-1927; vol.3: 1927-1937) (Beijing: Sanlian, 1957).

¹² David Faure, *The Rural Economy of Pre-Liberation China: Trade Expansion and Peasant Livelihood in Jiangsu and Guangdong, 1870 to 1937* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), see the "Introduction."

been published.¹³ These books are collections of essays dealing with specific topics and there are no comparisons or generalizations. Until now, the multi-volumes source materials on modern Chinese agriculture, handicraft and industry edited by the researchers at the Institute of Economics still represent the main opinion of Chinese scholars.¹⁴ For students of Chinese agricultural history, the three volumes still are the indispensable sources.

In the Western academic world, the first book to deal with Chinese agricultural history was written by Dwight Perkins.¹⁵ This is a quantitative analysis book, no one could challenge his conclusion that for about five centuries, Chinese agricultural production only increased more or less according to the population increase. From 1970 on, American scholars began to engage in regional studies. On north China villages and peasant economy, two books have been published: Ramon Myers *The Chinese Peasant Economy: Agricultural Development in Hopei and Shantung, 1890-1949* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970) and Philip Huang *The Peasant Economy and Social Changes in North China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985). As the pioneer work on north China villages, Myers' book was full of data but lacks analysis. Huang researched the peasant economy and social change emphasizing

¹³ Cong Hanxiang, ed., *Jindai Ji-Lu-Yu xiangcun* (Rural Ji-Lu-Yu in Modern Period) (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue, 1995). Wei Hongyun, ed., *Er-shi shiji san-si-shi niandai jidong nongcun shehui diaocha yu yanjiu* (Investigation and Research on Eastern Hebei Villages, 1930s and 1940s) (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin, 1994)

¹⁴ The researchers at the Institute of Economics are continuing to work on the project of compiling multi-volumes economic history of modern China. They have already published several volumes, but no volume focuses on agricultural history.

¹⁵ Dwight Perkins, *Agricultural Development in China, 1368-1968* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969).

the advantages of managerial farming and agricultural involution. Myers mentioned the role of markets and commercialization,¹⁶ but both Myers and Huang focused on the agricultural sector and overlooked the importance of rural industry and commerce's influence on peasant life.

Loren Brandt and David Faure's studies focused on south China,¹⁷ and their conclusion about commercialization and Western impact on the Chinese rural sector is worth discussing. Both Brandt and Faure disagreed with the Chinese scholars' "pessimistic opinion" on Chinese agricultural history and argued that commercialization and international trade were more beneficial than harmful to the Chinese peasant. Are Brandt's and Faure's conclusions suitable to north China's situation? A case study is needed to test it.

Perhaps for the convenience in compiling, the editors at the Institute of Economics divided the Chinese economy into three fields: agriculture, handicraft and [modern] industry, but there was no generalization of the whole economy. Brandt and Faure talked about commerce and Western impact on agriculture, but they discussed little about the influence of rising cities and new Western style industry on the rural sector. Myers and Huang did not even mention this influence. In north China, besides the capital—Beijing, there were new rising industrial centers, such as Tianjin and Tangshan, and there were new transportation facilities, such as railways and steam

¹⁶ Myers, *The Chinese Peasant Economy*, chapters 15 and 18.

¹⁷ Loren Brandt, *Commercialization and Agricultural Development: Central and Eastern China, 1870-1937* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Faure, *The Rural Economy of Pre-Liberation China*.

ships. There must have been some connection between traditional agriculture and these new sectors, but no one has discussed this relation in detail.

As Eastern Hebei is wholly covered by the research of Myers and Huang and both of them utilized the same Japanese investigation materials, it is necessary to discuss their studies in detail. Compared with Huang's book, Ramon Myers' research included more aspects of village life in north China. He first described the social and economic conditions of four sample villages and then generalized and discussed his findings in other parts. Philip Huang thought that a short time frame was a major weakness of Ramon Myers' book.¹⁸ While Myers' study suffers from too broad a research area and too many topics,¹⁹ it is, nevertheless, a pioneer work. There was perhaps no better way to introduce the Japanese materials to the world.

As the title shows, Huang's book could be divided into two parts—peasant economy and social change. Although he devoted twice the effort to economic involution than to the social change, his major contribution to the understanding of Chinese rural society is not in the first topic but in the second one. He is the first scholar to use the Baodi county archives to reconstruct the social organization of the late Qing period. His first topic focused on the comparison of the so-called managerial farming and family farming. His conclusion was that managerial farming was superior

¹⁸ Huang, *The Peasant Economy*, 47, footnote.

¹⁹ As Cheryl Payer pointed out, "Myers presents his data and generalization in jerky and disconnected fashion which makes it difficult to follow the argument." He concluded that most of Myers' arguments in the book were "virtually unsupported." Cheryl Payer, "Was the Chinese Peasant Exploited? A Review of *The Chinese Peasant Economy: Agricultural Development in Hopei and Shantung, 1890-1949* by Ramon H. Myers." *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 2 (January 1975), 229-36.

to family farming in labor production because the former could add or decrease labor to reach the highest efficiency. Loren Brandt questioned this conclusion and pointed out that “having worked with the same data [as Philip Huang did], I am impressed by the great similarity, not the differences, in behavior between farm categories [that means, the managerial and family farms].” At the end, Brandt concluded that “rather than contributing significantly to our existing knowledge of the social, economic, and demographic change of the period, this [Huang’s] book seems more likely to muddy the water.”²⁰ Brandt’s conclusion might be too extreme. Both written materials utilized in this study and the personal interview information support the argument that managerial farming was more productive than petty family farming. But Philip Huang misinterpreted the causes and exaggerated the differences. For example, in one chapter (chapter 8), he argued against earlier scholars’ suggestions that more labor animals and fertilizer use were two reasons for the higher productivity of the managerial farming, but my reading of the same materials reveals a contrary conclusion: in Eastern Hebei, animal excrement and urine were the main source of organic fertilizer (there was little or no chemical fertilizer at that time) and only the rich peasants (most of them were managerial farmers) raised domestic animals, such as horses, oxen, donkeys and pigs. Thus, they had more fertilizer and a corresponding higher land productivity (see the discussion in chapter 3 of this study). In another chapter (chapter 9), Huang overstressed the family farmers’ over-use or mis-use of their land and labor. At one point,

²⁰ Loren Brandt, book review of *The Peasant Economy*, in *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 35 (April 1987): 676.

he said that for higher returns the family farmers planted more cash crop [cotton] than others [according to Huang, this put the family farmers at a higher risk for crop failure], at another point, he stated that to earn higher wages the family farmers hired themselves out to the rich people [most of them were managerial farmers] in the busy seasons, resulting in the poor harvest of their own crops²¹. Such analysis begs a question: is Huang's description unreliable or did the family farmers have a mental problem? Based on these misinterpretations of the selected materials, Huang exaggerated the different results of cash crop planting between the managerial farming and family farming. This exaggeration drew the extreme criticism of Brandt. In fact, both Huang and Brandt stressed the impact of commercialization on agricultural production and peasant life. But Brandt (and David Faure) argued that commercialization and international trade benefited both rich and poor peasants and improved their living standard. To Brandt, "the real weakness in Huang's argument is his contention that commercialization benefited only a small segment of the rural population."²² At this time, I am not sure whose argument is more reasonable, but it seems to me that Huang (and to some degree also both Brandt and Faure) gave too narrow a definition of commercialization in his study.

To Philip Huang, the planting of the so-called cash crop, especially cotton, was the only criterion to measure the degree of commercialization. Using this criterion, he

²¹ Huang, *The Peasant Economy*, 162, 156.

²² Brandt, review of *The Peasant Economy*, in *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 35 (April 1987): 678.

divided the agricultural villages into “relatively uncommercialized,” “moderately commercialized” and “highly commercialized” categories. He talked about the important relationship between the ecological system and agricultural production, but he overlooked or ignored the different soil and watering conditions on peasants’ (in different villages) decision of crop choice. It appears that the choice of crop for planting was totally determined by the peasants’ preference or so-called market orientation. This choice produces variations: in the same county (Fengrun county), one village was “relatively uncommercialized” (Jiaojiazhuang), the other was “highly commercialized” (Michang). Huang did not explain the differences. The more contradictory example is that according to Huang, Shajing in Shunyi county and Xiaojie in Tong county (both near Beijing) were “moderately commercialized” villages but Longwo in Yutian county and Zhongliangshan in Changli county (neither of them was near a big city) were “highly commercialized.” The proper criterion to measure the commercialization of rural economy should be the percentage of cash income in peasant’s total income or the percentage of purchased goods in total consumption. The later chapters of this study will show that the peasants in Shajing and Xiaojie received more cash income than the peasants did in Longwo and Zhongliangshan. From this point of view, the former two were more commercialized than the later two.

It is true that Philip Huang pointed out that many family farms could not support their members on farming alone and he noted the importance of sideline production and rural industry in some villages, but he immediately warned the readers that “though the

handicraft industry certainly helped to sustain the small-peasant economy, we must not exaggerate its role. The fact that only five of my 33 villages had a developed handicraft industry cautions against imagining an economy in which almost all poor family farms drew on home industry for support.”²³ The problem is Huang used a narrow definition for “home industry.” In his writing, only handicraft spinning, weaving, and straw braiding were “home industries.” His stress was on the wage income of the hiring out farming laborers, but to many villagers, this income was much less than other non-farming employment earnings. In Huang’s description, the peasants seemed to be farmers and the peasant economy was composed of farming plus a little home industry. The following chapters will show this description about Chinese peasants is not complete, at least for the peasants in Eastern Hebei.

Research area and the basic sources

The question—why research on north China and use the same Japanese investigative materials again?—has been raised several times by colleagues in the course of this study. To most, the publications of Myers and Huang provide enough data to understand north China peasants and there is no need to study the Japanese investigation materials again. Besides the above listed shortcomings and the need for additional research on the peasant’s life in China, there are the issues of the sample villages being truly representative and the need to consider sub-regional differences.

²³ Huang, *The Peasant Economy*, 196.

An examination of the Eastern Hebei region, see Figure 1-1, illustrates the last two points. As Figure 1-1 shows, Philip Huang's research area covered the lowland areas of Hebei and northwest Shandong (Myers' research area is larger than Huang's, it included the two provinces), but among his 33 investigated villages (Myers studied fewer villages), 22, or 66 percent of the total, are located in a small part of the research area—Eastern Hebei, which he called northeastern Hebei in his study. Were the sample villages properly representative of the whole research region? Even if the answer is yes, we should not ignore the sub-regional differences. The ecological systems were different from Eastern Hebei to Central or Southern Hebei. According to Philip Huang, the sown-area-to-cultivated-area figure (in other words, the index of double-cropping) was 116.3 in northeastern Hebei (Eastern Hebei), 139.3 in central Hebei and 143.7 in southern Hebei in 1949.²⁴ In the modern period, as two seaports (Tianjin and Qinhuangdao) were opened in Eastern Hebei, modern transportation systems and new industries were also developed there. These facts made Eastern Hebei a unique economic sub-region which is worth a separate study and the emphasis of Japanese investigations in the 1930s on this area makes this study possible.

Both Ramon Myers and Philip Huang introduced the Japanese investigation data on north China and Huang also gave a critical assessment of these materials.²⁵ The following provides a basic discussion of the origins of the Eastern Hebei investigations

²⁴ Huang, *The Peasant Economy*, 58.

²⁵ Myers, *The Chinese Peasant Economy*, Chapter 3; Huang, *The Peasant Economy*, Chapter 2.

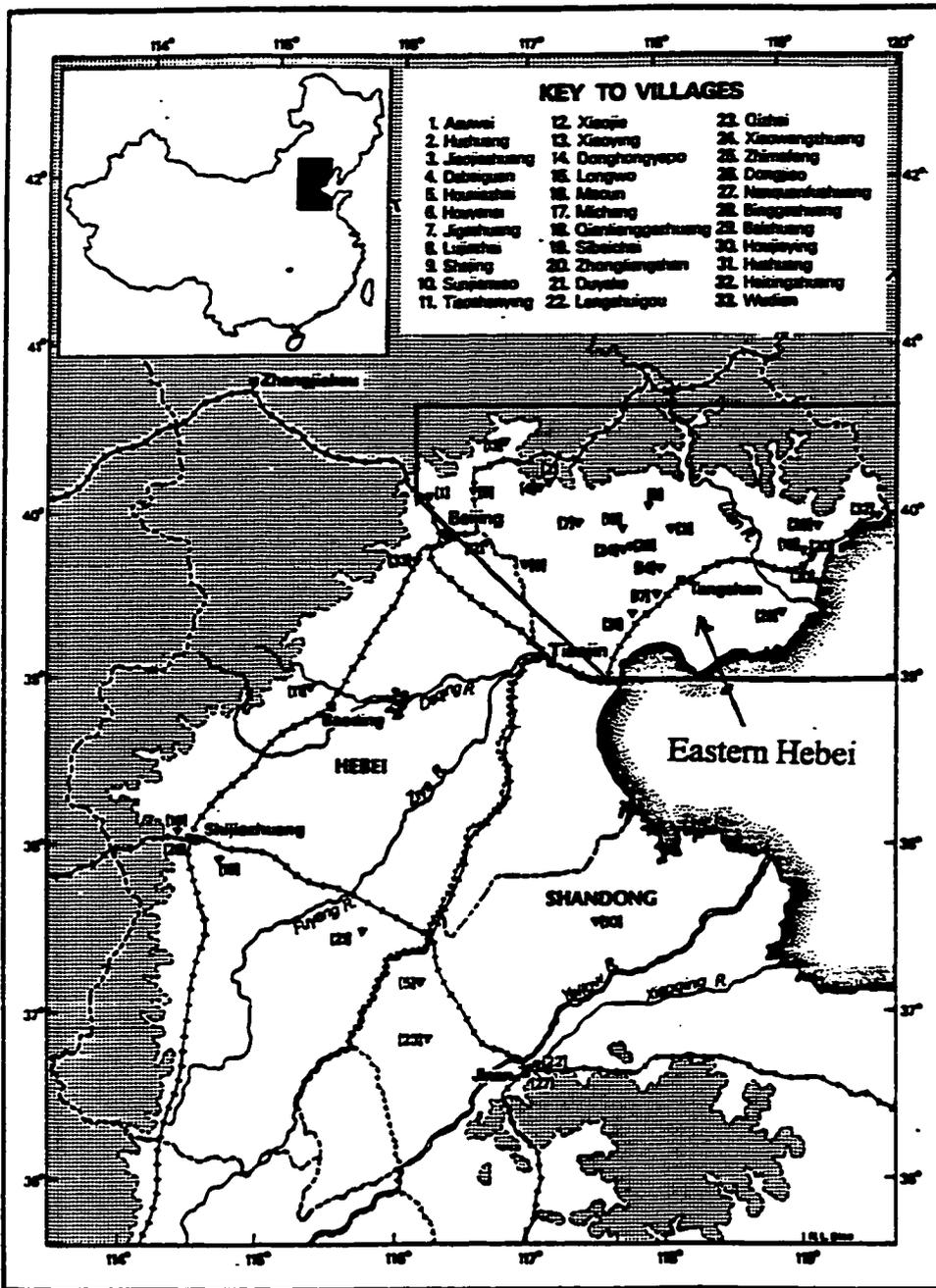


Figure 1-1, Philip Huang's research area and the Mantetsu surveyed villages
 (Adapted from Map 2.2 in Huang, *The Peasant Economy*, p.45.)

by the Japanese. At the end of 1935, the Japanese military intelligence created an investigative corps to study village conditions in the area controlled by the so-called Eastern Hebei Autonomous Federation for Joint Defense Against Communism (discussed in Chapter 2). The 30-man corps included seven intelligence agents assigned by the army, researchers of the Mantetsu (the short name for the Japanese South Manchuria Railway Company) research staff, and nine Japanese students studying in China under Mantetsu auspices at the time. The thirty investigators were divided into 14 squads and investigated 16 counties in Eastern Hebei from April 22 to May 15, 1936. They first gathered basic information about the county at the county seat and then investigated one, two or more villages in each county. The result was published in four books in the same year, the most important one was *Report on the Investigation of Actual Conditions in 25 Villages in Eastern Hebei* (2 vol.).

In 1937 four villages in four Eastern Hebei counties—Dabeiguan in Pinggu, Xifanzhuang in Baodi, Michang in Fengrun and Qianlianggezhuang in Changli—were selected for in-depth study by five-man investigating teams. The teams spent four weeks in the field, from February 16 to March 17, 1937, gathering detailed statistical information on each household in 16 categories, including landownership, wage labor, croppings, marketing, taxes, capital equipment, and income and expenses. The three studies on three of the villages were considered satisfactory and published in three volumes. The fourth village, in Baodi, was deemed to require further investigation and the survey was never published.

From 1937 to 1939, one of the four villages—Michang in Fengrun—had been selected for consecutive investigation to understand the peasant economy. A resident Chinese researcher was sent there to keep detailed records for the sample families. The result was published in three volumes of statistical data.

The last but most detailed village investigation was pursued by the combination of Mantetsu investigators and academic researchers from the law faculty of Tokyo University and the economic faculty of Kyoto University. Between November 1940 and December 1942, they focused on six villages in North China. Two of them, Shajing in Shunyi county and Houjiaying in Changli county, are located in Eastern Hebei. The results were first printed in more than 100 separate reports and then published in six large volumes in the 1950s. Three of the six volumes dealt with Shajing and Houjiaying.

Other Japanese materials included independent reports on specific economic issues, such as cotton producing in Xiaojie village in Tong county, the special trade (smuggling) in Eastern Hebei, and the tariff problem between Eastern Hebei and Manchuria.

Some Chinese investigators also produced a high quality report on the economic situation in Eastern Hebei. In 1935, The Beining (Beijing-Liaoning) Railway Company organized a team to survey the economic conditions along the railroad. At that time, the company had already lost control of the railroad to the Japanese beyond Shanhaiguan. The investigation only covered Beijing to Shanhaiguan railway section in

the Eastern Hebei area. The result was published in six volumes. This investigation provided detailed information about products, marketing and population movements in Eastern Hebei. Myers listed this report in his bibliography but Huang did not mention it in his book.

Besides the above listed sources, county gazetteers (local history), contemporary studies and the Maritime Custom Reports (for Tianjin and Qinhuangdao for the years from 1870 to 1937) have been consulted for this study. Interviews were also conducted with several elderly residents in Eastern Hebei. Their recollections about the 1930s in particular are used to check the written materials.

A few words about the time frame and the thesis organization

As most historians admit, it is difficult to give a specific year for the beginning of economic development in one area. Although Tianjin was opened as treaty port in 1860 and the Custom Office was established there in 1864, the countryside would be penetrated by foreign goods and the peasants would feel the impact of Western competition only in later years. So, this research selects 1870 as the beginning year of study. Of course, to explore the origins of some economic system or political events, sometimes pre-1870 must be considered. Like most discussions on pre-1949 Chinese economic history, this study will end in 1937. As the evidence below will show, the Manchuria Incident of 1931 and the establishment of Manchuguo had already changed the economic situation and affected peasants' life in Eastern Hebei. The Japanese

invasion of North China in 1937 and the out break of a war of resistance formally declared the end of an old period. The survey materials made by Japanese investigators in the early 1940s will be used to demonstrate this violent change.

Because few Chinese peasants left any record of themselves (most of them could not write or read), there are no vivid descriptions about the peasant life in this research area. The investigation reports were full of numbers and statistics but lack narratives. From these materials, I have been compelled to show the economic changes in this area. It may be boring to read too many tables, but in economic history, the numbers, especially percentages, are more reliable than “many,” “few” and other adjectives in describing incomes and expenses.

As the title shows, this thesis tries to show how the peasants in Eastern Hebei made their living. The central part—chapters 3, 4 and 5—will deal with agricultural production, rural industry and commerce respectively. Then chapter 6 discusses the questions asked by all students who research modern Chinese economic history: What was the effect of imperialism or the foreign economic invasion? Was the peasant living standard improved or lowered? What were the main causes for this change? The conclusion (chapter 7) will summarize what this research has discovered and provide some observations concerning the modern Chinese peasant economy and the re-emergence of rural industry as critical factors in the peasants' livelihood. Before dealing with all these issues, the ecological setting of Eastern Hebei must first be discussed.

CHAPTER 2. THE ECOSYSTEM OF EASTERN HEBEI:
ITS GEOGRAPHY, CLIMATE AND POPULATION

As Philip Huang pointed out, “a historian of court politics, or of gentry ideology, or of urban development, does not necessarily have to take into account climate, topography, water, and the like. But the historian studying the people of an agrarian society can ill afford to overlook these features, for the natural environment is what shapes the life and orders the day of the peasant.”¹ Peter C. Perdue also found that “in every Chinese region, physiographic features of the landscape—topography, climate, water supply, and soil quality—condition the forms of agriculture production.”² In pre-1949 China, it was the natural condition, or ecosystem as Philip Huang called it, not the human being, that decided the agricultural calendar, cropping portfolio, and to some degree, the peasant’s living standard. Huang’s own description about the ecological setting of north China generally describes the natural condition of Eastern Hebei,³ but, as a sub-region of north China, Eastern Hebei had its own ecological features, these features determined the economic development of Eastern Hebei.

¹ Huang, *The Peasant Economy*, 53.

² Peter C. Perdue, *Exhausting the Earth: State and Peasant in Hunan, 1500-1850*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 25.

³ Philip Huang, *The Peasant Economy*, 53-66.

The location of Eastern Hebei

Eastern Hebei, or *Jidong* (*Ji* is the abbreviated name of Hebei province and *dong* means east), was the regional name for the area which was located east of the Nankou-Beijing-Tianjin railway line, south of the Great Wall and north of the Pohai Bay. Its geographical location is between 116°-120° east longitude and 38°55'-40°45' north latitude. It included the following twenty-one counties: Changping, Huairou, Miyun, Pinggu, Tong, Sanhe, Xianghe, Baodi, Ninghe, Xinglong, Zunhua, Ji, Yutian, Fengrun, Luan, Leting, Qian-an, Lulong, Changli, Funing and Linyu (see Figure 2-1). An additional county Xianglong was created in the early 1930s and since its jurisdiction prior to 1930 was under Ji, Zunhua and other counties, it is excluded from this study.

As a regional name, *Jidong*, or Eastern Hebei, was well known all over the country in the late 1930s and the 1940s. But during the Qing (1644-1911) and early Republic periods (1912-1935), this area was popularly called *Jingdong* (literally meaning east of Beijing), the counties in this area belonged to different prefectures or circuits. In the spring of 1933, under the threat of Japanese military invasion, the representatives of China and Japan signed the “Tanggu Truce” which ruled the area east of the Beijing-Tianjin line in Hebei province as a “demilitarized zone” or “un-armed

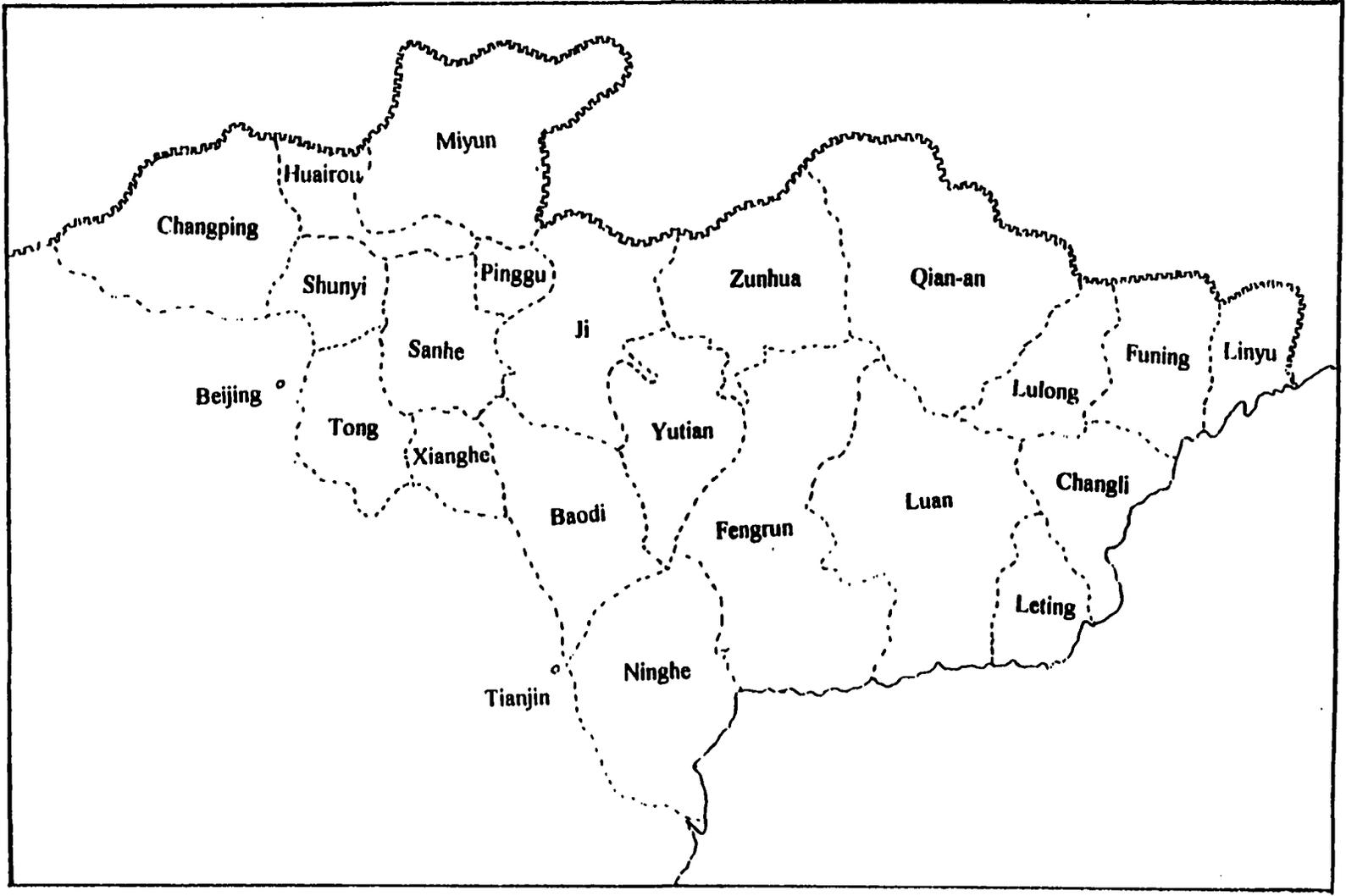


Figure 2-1, Counties in Eastern Hebei

area” (Chinese troops had to withdraw from this area).⁴ At the end of 1935, under the Japanese military authority’s instigation, Yin Rugeng, a puppet of the Japanese, established the so-called Eastern Hebei Autonomous Federation for Joint Defense Against Communism at the Tong county seat.⁵ From that time on, Eastern Hebei became an often-mentioned administrative and geographic name in the newspapers and among the people.

Eastern Hebei’s location gave its economy an important impact. Historically, the Great Wall was not only a defense fortification to prevent nomadic people’s invasion but also a natural line of division between agricultural and stock-raising regions. Shanhaiguan, or the Shanhai-gate, was called the Number One Gate under Heaven. It was the beginning of the Great Wall in the east. For a long time, it was the main gate to Manchuria. Traditionally, Han-Chinese called Manchuria as *Guandong*, or East of Shanhaiguan. The local people of Eastern Hebei called the area north of the Great Wall (in the Republic period, it belonged to Jehol province) as *Kouwai* (in Chinese, *Kou* means pass), or Outside of the Passes, because there were many passes on

⁴ About the Tangu Truce, *TIME* had the following report: “Officers of the Nationalist Government and Japanese met secretly at Hwajju [Huairou?], 30 mi. north of Peiping, and agreed verbally to the following terms: 1) Chinese forces would remain south, Japanese north of an imaginary line from Yenking [Yanqing], 45 mi. northwest of Peiping, through Tungchow [Tongzhou], 13 mi. east, to Ningho [Ninghe], 30 mi. northeast of Tientsin [Tianjin]. 2) Chinese ‘volunteer corps’ in the war area would be disbanded, Chinese promised to suppress anti-Japanese boycotting and other activities. 3) Japanese troops would withdraw to the Great Wall as soon as convinced that Chinese had lived up her part of the bargain.” *TIME*, 5 June 1933, 17-18.

⁵ About the “Eastern Hebei Autonomous Federation,” *TIME* had the following report: “Last November [November, 1935], without the use of a single regiment, Japan’s Major General Kenji Doihara set up a pro-Japanese ‘autonomous government’ in eastern Hopei known as the Autonomous Federation for Joint Defense Against Communism. Its head was a twerpish-looking young man known as Yin Ju-keng [Yin Rugeng], whose only flash of independence is a stolid refusal to allow himself to be photographed with his two Japanese advisers.” *TIME*, 11 May 1936, 25.

the Wall, such as Nankou, Gubeikou, Xifengkou and Yiyuankou. Through these passes, people traveled and goods were transported back and forth through the Great Wall. The geographical location gave the people of Eastern Hebei an advantage in emigrating to Manchuria and in handicraft production because its nearness to the market beyond the Great Wall. But nearness to Beijing and Manchuria also brought Eastern Hebei an unexpected disaster—the enclosing of land by the Manchus in the early Qing period.

The problem of bannerland

After the Manchus conquered China proper and established capital at Beijing, the Shunzhi Emperor (reigned from 1644 to 1661) immediately granted land to his followers—those Manchus and Mongols who followed him as he entered China proper. At first, he just gave the so-called “[late Ming] official estates without owners” (supposedly the owners had died in the dynastic transition war) and “waste land without owners” to Manchu princes, nobles and soldiers. But these so-called un-claimed lands were far short of the need and the Manchus began to enclose Han-Chinese’s property giving it to the new comers. Historically, these enclosed lands were called bannerlands because the Manchus were organized into an Eight-banner system and were called bannermen (*qiren*, the Han-Chinese were called *minren*, or commoners). As Philip Huang has noted “bannerland loomed especially large in the capital province of Zhili, accounting for 17,600,000 *mu* in 1657, compared with 42,700,000 *mu* of privately

owned land, or roughly 29 percent of the total arable.⁶ Because Eastern Hebei was near Beijing and was located on the corridor between China proper and Manchuria, all twenty-one counties had bannerland in their jurisdictions. According to Ju Zhendong's research, there was more than 6,000,000 *mu* of bannerland in Eastern Hebei (see Table 2-1). That means 35 percent of the bannerland in Zhili, or 14 percent of the total bannerland in the whole country, was located in Eastern Hebei.

Ju Zhendong got his source from Qing governmental archives which might be smaller than the actual *mu* for the following two reasons: First, the enclosing was very

Table 2-1, Mu of bannerland in Eastern Hebei

County	Acres (mu)	County	Acres (mu)
Tong	393,535	Lulong	349,326
Sanhe	345,831	Luan	421,667
Baodi	264,624	Qian-an	314,523
Changping	263,014	Funing	278,429
Shunyi	256,194	Changli	265,941
Huairou	192,436	Leting	297,283
Miyun	239,728	Linyu	486,455
Ji	275,560	Fengrun	302,678
Xianghe	254,235	Zunhua	356,413
Ninghe	165,027	Yutian	247,825
Pinggu	165,438	Total	6,138,162

Source: Ju Zhendong, *Hebei qidi zhi yanjiu* (A Study of Bannerland in Hebei) in Xiao Zheng, ed., *Mingguo 20 niandai dalu tudi wenti ziliao* (Materials on the Land Question in the Mainland During the 1920s), no.75, (Taipei: Chengwen, 1977), 39616-39619.

⁶ Huang, *The Peasant Economy*, 87.

crude in the seventeenth century, there was no serious measurement. Second, the governmental land figures were most likely the taxing-mu which was larger than the actual *mu*. If the land given to the bannermen “voluntarily” by the private owners (*douxian*) was included, the total bannerland mu should be larger and the percentage of bannerland in the total mu of cultivable land in Eastern Hebei should be higher. Table 2-2 shows the mu of bannerland and its percentage in two Eastern Hebei counties.

Table 2-2, Bannerland and its percentage in Ji and Fengrun counties (unit: mu)

County	Bannerland	Commoner's land	Total	Percentage of bannerland
Ji	427,804	7,063	434,868	98%
Fengrun	1,079,749	71,153	1,150,964	94

Source: *Ji xianzhi* (Ji Gazetteer) (1944), vol.5, Taxes; *Fengrun xianzhi* (Fengrun Gazetteer) (1921), vol. 1, Land tax.

As Table 2-2 shows, in the early Qing period (especially in the Shunzhi reign), almost all cultivable land in Eastern Hebei was granted to bannermen by the government or given to them by the Han-Chinese “voluntarily.” To pacify the deprived Han-Chinese, the Manchu rulers ordered the magistrates in other counties to survey the un-claimed or could-be-opened lands and give them to those who lost their lands to the bannermen. Because most of those “compensated lands” (*babudi*) were located far away, few peasants went there to claim them. Most of the peasants in Eastern Hebei had to become tenants on the land which was owned by themselves earlier, this made

the peasants' life harder in this area than in other areas. *Leting Gazetteer* described this situation for its peasant as followings.

Leting county faces Pohai Bay in the southeast and had the Luan river in the northwest [the river changed its course in later years], the little fertile land was enclosed and given to the bannermen in the Shunzhi period. The privately owned land (commoners' land or *mindì*) was only about 20 percent of the total cultivable land and almost all of them were easily waterlogged or sandy dunes. By one year's hard work, the harvest was one *dou* per *mu*. Most peasants had to make their living by cultivating the bannerland as tenants. In the good harvest years, the peasants hardly managed to keep their families from starvation [after paying the rents]. If there was a drought or flood, the harvest was not enough to pay the cost. Because the custom of "rent deposit" or "rent-borrowing" (paying rent in advance), the rent had already been paid but there was little or no harvest, many tenants got into trouble in such a way.⁷

Under the governmental rule, the bannerland could not be sold to Han-Chinese, but the bannermen always sold their lands to their tenants or others under the name of "borrowing money by mortgaging the bannerland" or "receiving the rent for the coming years." In the eighteenth century, Qianlong Emperor (reigned 1736-1796, d.1799) utilized the governmental money to buy back the bannerland mortgaged or sold by the bannermen and put this land under governmental control. In the second half of the nineteenth century, to raise money for suppressing peasants rebellions or resisting foreign invasions, the Qing government tried to lift the ban on bannerland marketing and let the cultivators pay taxes to the state directly, but until 1889, only about half million *mu* in the whole country changed registration from bannerland to private land.⁸ In 1907, the ban of bannerland-selling was lifted forever, but this problem of bannerland was not so easily solved as Philip Huang noted "by the end of the Qing

⁷ *Leting xianzhi* (Leting Gazetteer), vol.2, Geography, Custom.

⁸ The government opened and closed the bannerland market three times in the second half of the nineteenth century. See Li Wenzhi, ed., *Source Materials on Agricultural History*, 1: 201.

[1911], except for the estates of the imperial clansmen, almost all bannerland had been sold to private owners, and what remained had become virtually indistinguishable from private land.”⁹ In Eastern Hebei, the government tried to sell the bannerland but the peasants did not want or simply had no money to buy back their ancestors’ properties which were taken by the Manchus. An example illustrates how the local government dealt with this problem.

The [Shunyi] Governmental Property Bureau (*guanchanju*), firstly named [governmental property] Investigation Bureau (*qingchaju*), was established in 1916 to deal with the eight-items of bannerland rents. Before 1928, the bureau ordered the original tenants [meaning the present cultivators] to buy the bannerland at the price of 13 dollars per silver rent tael [that means the tenant could buy the land on which he paid 1 silver tael rent a year for 13 dollars]. After 1928, the bannerland was sold at the prices of 2, 3, or 4 dollars per *mu*. After the tenant bought the land and became land owners, he should pay 0.04 tael per *mu* per year as land tax. . . . From 1916 to 1931, 5,495 silver taels of the bannerland rent was sold and the land totaled 54,240 *mu*. There was still 33,984 *mu* registered as bannerland and the Bureau still encourage the tenants to buy the land.¹⁰

Just as enclosing the land in the early Qing period brought disaster to the peasant, so too did selling of bannerland. In Qianfengbei village in Shunyi county, a reporter found that “every day one could hear the news that those who had no money to buy back the bannerland were arrested and put into prison.” He also found that because there were many bannermen in Hebei village [in Shunyi county], the percentage of bannerland in that village was so high that many peasants had to borrow money to buy back the “governmental property” in 1926 as the government ordered. But, “unfortunately, in the following years, either flood or drought made the harvest poor, but the taxes and levies were increased so much that the land prices dropped

⁹ Huang, *The Peasant Economy*, 98, footnote.

¹⁰ *Shunyi xianzhi* (Shunyi Gazetteer) (1933), vol.6, Taxes and levies.

dramatically. The peasants were falling into heavy debt and many were forced to bankruptcy. More than one hundred households which have not bought all the land they cultivated but had already sold all that they just bought.”¹¹

In Baodi county, the governmental officials colluded with the landlords to exploit the tenants in bannerland selling in the early 1930s:

As in other counties in Hebei province, part of the land of the big landlords was bannerland. After the establishment of the Governmental Property Bureau, these lands were treated as governmental property. But as these lands were controlled by the big landlords now, it is impossible to confiscate them. Then the Bureau officials negotiated with the landlords and devised a mutually beneficial policy: the Bureau would declare certain part of the landlords' land as 'bannerlands' and confiscate them, then the Bureau would order the landlords to buy it back. But, as they agreed, the landlords would plead that they have no money to buy the land and would like to give up the ownership of the land—it is true that few landlords have enough savings to buy all their bannerlands. Then, the Governmental Property Bureau ordered those tenants who cultivated the bannerland to pay the deed tax and take the lands as private lands. If the tenants were unable to pay the money, the officials utilized illegal forces, such as sending policemen to arrest the tenants. Last year [1932], hundreds poor tenants were put into prison by Daodi county authority on such pretexts. Most tenants were forced to buy the bannerlands by all means, some of them had to sell their wives or daughters to get the needed money. The price was 3 or 4 dollars per *mu*. The Bureau divided what they received from the tenants with the landlords who claimed they owned the sold lands. Generally, the government got four-tenths and the landlords got the rest. Some people might argue that after buying the land, the tenants became land owners and could make a living on the lands easier than cultivating other's land. The reality was not so sweet for the tenants, as almost all money which the tenants used to buy the land was borrowed on high interests (some were borrowed by putting their will-be-bought lands as security). Now, they farmed their own lands and paid no more rents, but, on the one hand, they had to pay high interest debt and land taxes and other sur-charges. On the other hand, as an owner-tenant, the officials, local tyrants and evil gentry treated them as land-owners and thought they could be pressed for more money, thus all kinds of levies on the lands were increased. As a result, in the first year after they got the land, if it was a good harvest, they could manage to meet their expenses. [In the following years,] if the harvest was poor or the prices for the grains dropped, they fell into trouble immediately and at last had to sell their lands to the creditors at a much lower price. But, usually, the creditors did not accept the land [as a payment for the debt], the peasants were forced to sell their children or draft animals to pay the debt.¹²

¹¹ Zhang Youyi, ed., *Source Materials on Agricultural History*, 3: 743.

¹² *Ibid.*, 742-743.

In Zunhua county, the enraged peasants destroyed the Governmental Property Bureau in 1930. According to Yang Si, a native of Zunhua and a participant of the first protest demonstration, the peasants in Zunhua were so poor that they just had no money to buy back what they cultivated. But the officials accused those who had not bought the bannerland of being bandits and put some of them in the prison, this led to the protest and the destruction the governmental building. The incident was described as following:

The governmental property bureau was established in Zunhua in 1924 or 1925, its responsibility was urging and supervising the peasants to buy the ownership of former bannerlands. But the peasants did not want to “buy” those lands which they had already owned and cultivated, the excuse is very simple: they had no money. But the bureau officials did not care about this fact. They first pasted up a notice and ordered the local constables to ask the peasants to go to the bureau to buy the land. As few peasants responded to the governmental order, the bureau began to intimidate the peasants and offered to reward those who reported the names of those who cultivated but did not buy the bannerland. This intimidation failed again. Then, the bureau felt it was necessary to use force. They first arrested the local constables and village heads, then began to arrest those who cultivated the bannerlands. This forced the peasants to respond. In March of 1927, about 2,000 peasants demonstrated in the county seat, the magistrate promised to transfer the peasants’ demand to the provincial government and the peasants returned home peacefully. But the next day, the magistrate declared that the peasants had been stirred up by the communists and the leader of the demonstration was executed. In the summer of 1930, the peasants demonstrated again, they yelled “down with the people’s enemy—the head of the governmental property bureau—Huang Shengjie!” But they did not touch any property in the bureau and the magistrate promised to suspend the selling of bannerland temporarily. In early 1931, the peasants rose up again, this time the angry peasants destroyed the offices of the governmental property bureau.¹³

It is impossible to answer the question of how much bannerland was sold and how much land was still cultivated by peasants as governmental tenants. But it is certain that in this violent political and social change period (1900-1937), some people, especially the local strongmen, such as former bannerland rent collectors and landlords,

¹³ *Ta Kong Pao* (Dagong Daily), 11 February 1931, 3.

increased their landholdings enormously by buying the low-priced governmental land and many others just changed their status from bannerland tenants to state or other private landlords' tenants. Table 2-3 shows that until the early 1930s, how the bannerland system affected the land ownership and land taxes in Shunyi county.

Table 2-3, Land taxes and rents in Shunyi county, 1930s

Land description	Mu	Tax or rent (tael)	Rate (tael/mu)
Private land (<i>Diliangdi</i>)	63,653	1,035	0.0163
Former bannerland (<i>Qican liangdi</i>)	1,530	33	0.0216
Newly registered land (<i>Shengkedì</i>)	63,404	1,526	0.0241
Governmental land (<i>Gongcan zudi</i>)	143,681	5,717	0.0398
Registered former rent land (<i>Shengke zudi</i>)	20,955	837	0.0399
Registered former bannerland (<i>Xin shengkedì</i>)	142,335	5,618	0.0395
Newly registered private land (<i>Xin shengliangdi</i>)	11,912	500	0.0420
Land sold to the former tenants (<i>Liu dianliangdi</i>)	78,556	1,277	0.0163
Former rented land (<i>Gai liangdi</i>)	54,240	2,289	0.0422
Total	580,266	18,832	0.0325

Source: *Shunyi xianzhi* (Shunyi Gazetteer) (1933), vol. 6, Taxes and levies.

As Table 2-3 shows, in Shunyi county, only about 13 percent of the total taxed land (75,565 *mu* in 580,266 *mu*) was originally private land, the other 87 percent was former bannerland or governmental land. In the early 1930s, although the bannerland had already been sold to commoners and became private land, the tax rate was different as Table 2-3 shows. Generally speaking, the land tax (sometimes it was still called governmental land rents) was heavier on the former bannerland than on the original private owned land. The village investigation material supports this generalization. In

Lujiashai village, Zunhua county, land tax on one *mu* up-grade commoner's land was 0.138 *yuan*, on mid-grade was 0.069 *yuan* and on the low-grade was 0.023 *yuan*. But on the former bannerland, the taxes on the same grades were 0.29, 0.21 and 0.08 *yuan* respectively.¹⁴ It is no doubt that land enclosing in the seventeenth century and bannerland selling in the early twentieth century still hurt the peasants in Eastern Hebei in the 1930s.

The soil condition and climate in Eastern Hebei

As part of the great North China Plain, most of Eastern Hebei is level and is under 100 meters above the sea level. But in the north area along the Great Wall, there are mountains which belong to *Yanshan*, or Yan-mountain range. In fact, the Great Wall was built on the ridges of these mountains. The topography of the eastern section of Eastern Hebei was described by the Custom Officials at Qinghuangdao as:

With the exception of the narrow strip of low-lying land along the sea, North-east Chihli is almost entirely mountainous. Between the first range, which rises behind Shanhaikwan [Shanhaiguan], and the sea there is but a narrow interval of plain, some 5 miles wide. At Chinwangtao [Qinghuangdao] the open country has expanded into a plain some 12 miles broad, grading near the hills and along the track of the railway into low, cultivated downs. . . . The mountain ranges run, roughly, from the north-east to the south-west, and at Lwanchow [Luan county seat] the low country finally broadens out into the Great Chihli Plain.¹⁵

Several rivers, such as Chaobei, Jiyun and Luan, originate north of the Great

¹⁴ Minami Manshu tetsudo kabushiki kaisha (Mantetsu), *Kito chiku noson jittai chosaban, Kito chiku jurokuko ken kensei gaikyo chosa hokokusho* (Report on the investigation of general conditions of the sixteen counties in Eastern Hebei) (Tianjin, 1936), 169.

¹⁵ China, Imperial Maritime Custom, *Decennial Reports on the Trade, Industries, etc., of the Ports Open to Foreign Commerce, and on the Condition and Development of the Treaty Port Province, 1902-11*, 144.

Wall and flow southward to the Bohai Bay. The silt soil is good for agriculture, but in some low located counties, such as Baodi, Yutian and Ninghe, the rivers always flooded and the crops were waterlogged. The coastal plain was too sandy and saline for plant growing (see Figure 2-2). In the nineteenth century, the coastal residents made a living on salt-boiling or fishing. In the twentieth century, some of the coastal land were opened for farming and the salt-makers changed to farmers.

In north China, the climate, especially the time and quantity of rainfall, had more effects on agricultural production than the soil conditions. George B. Cressey, an American professor of geography who visited China in the early 1930s, wrote that “the soil [in north China] is more or less a constant, but the weather is not. Man lives on the earth, but his life depends even more on the atmosphere. With adequate rain, the land produces rich harvest; without it the plain is a parched semidesert. Rainfall is the key to prosperity. Each village has its rain god, and tablets which are supposed to bring precipitation are found in many temples.”¹⁶ Unfortunately, for north China the amount of rainfall is not only precariously low but is subject to wide fluctuations, in both amount and time. Droughts in May and June are especially serious (see Figure 2-3).

As Figure 2-3 shows, there was little precipitation in winter and spring. Spring drought always delayed planting. June was the last period for spring planting, but as Figure 2-4 shows, rainfall in June fluctuated widely from year to year, sometimes it was less than 10 mm which inevitably meant crop failure. The rainfall was concentrated in

¹⁶ George B. Cressey, *China's Geographic Foundation: A Survey of the Land and its People*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Company, Inc., 1934), 169.

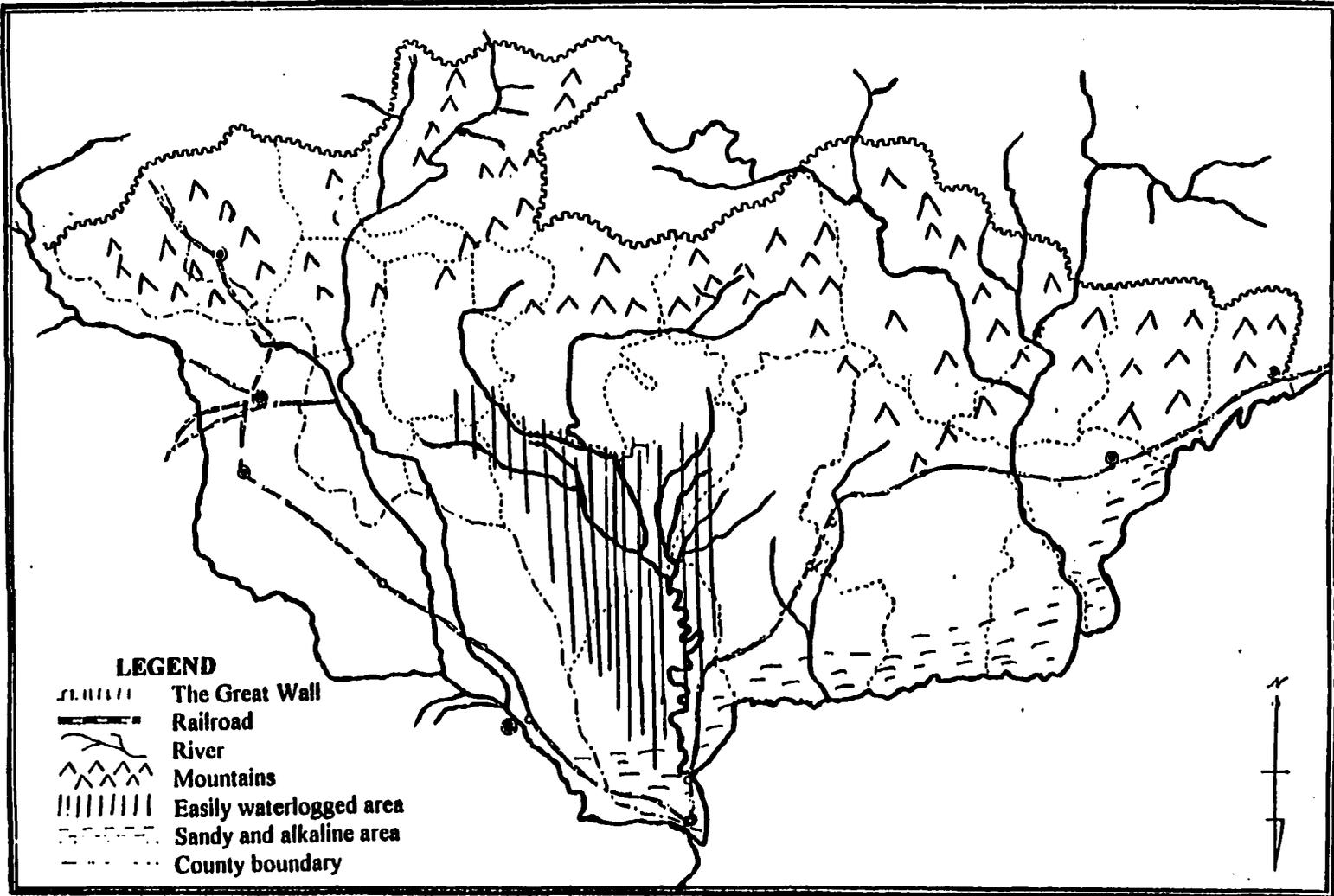


Figure 2-2, Topography of Eastern Hebei

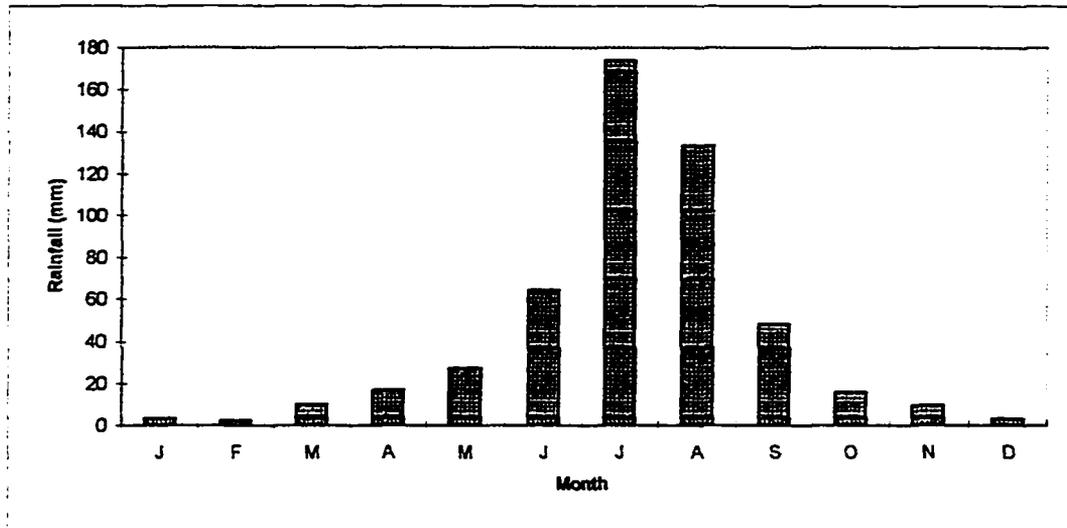


Figure 2-3, Monthly average rainfall in Tianjin (1891-1925)

July and August, and plenty of rain and high temperature was good for the plant growing, but heavy rains at this time always flooded the river banks and waterlogged the low crop fields. Once again, George Cressey's description about the north China perfectly fits Eastern Hebei: "Too little rain means crop failure and famine, while excessive rain brings flood and also famine. Often the rainfall is so concentrated that the otherwise dry watercourses overflow and great shallow lakes develop in the interstream depressions. Since the land is so flat, drainage is slow and these water bodies may remain for months."¹⁷

¹⁷ Ibid., 169.

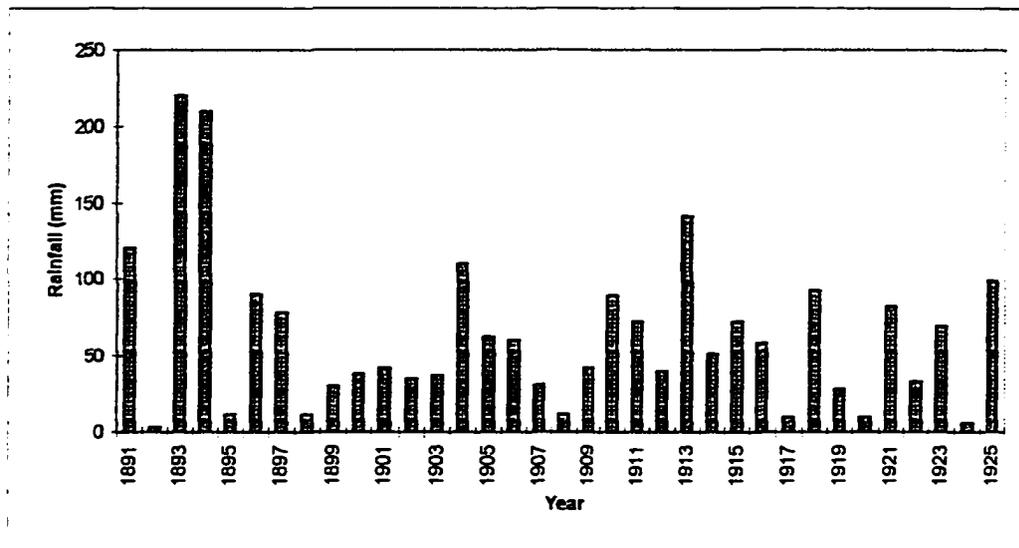


Figure 2-4, Rainfall in June in Tianjin (1891-1925)

According to later statistics for Tangshan area (including Fengrun, Zunhua, Luan, Qian-an, Lulong, Leting, Changli, Funing and Linyu counties), in the 517 years from 1470 to 1986, 48 years were heavy flood years and 130 were light flood. The two added up to 178 years and composed 34.4 percent of the total years. On average, 2.9 years had a flood year. Besides the flood, there was 33 years of serious drought and 116 years of light drought, the two added up to 149 years and composed 28.8 percent of the total years. On average, 3.4 years had a drought year. In the 517 years, only 190 years, or 36.8 percent of the total years, had normal precipitation, the other 327 years, or 63.2 percent of the total, experienced flood or drought disaster.¹⁸ The “spring drought and

¹⁸ Wei Hongyun, ed., *Investigation and Research on Eastern Hebei Villages*, 138.

summer flood” is typically reflected in the weather condition in 1930. *Ta Kong Pao*, the most popularly read newspaper in north China, was full of the news of “drought and flood” here and there in the page of “local reports.” On July 5, 1930, the report from Changli read that “from the spring to summer, there has been little rainfall in this area. The sun burned the land every day and the temperature is high. The crops turns to yellow and many fruit trees died in the orchards. In the past week, many peasants offered sacrifices in the temples and prayed for rain. More than half of the 800 villages in Changli county built the alters and prayed in front them, but the sky is still clear and there is no rain until now. The peasants are very pitiful”¹⁹ Even if the Jade Emperor (the Chinese peasant thought the Jade Emperor controled the rainfall in the Heaven) answered the peasants’ prayers, the rainfall would be too late to save the spring crops. But the drought was not the only disaster that year for the Eastern Hebei peasants. One month later after they prayed for rain, they blamed the Jade Emperor for too much of it. On August 12, it was reported that the heavy rain caused flood in Jiyun river and more than 200 villages in Baodi county were submerged. On the same day, Luan county reported that even in the elevated areas, the flood water inundated one’s legs and in the low villages the flood was so high that the peasants had to live on the roofs of their houses.²⁰ The natural conditions, especially the fluctuation of rainfall, made agricultural production precarious in Eastern Hebei. In the years that flood or drought destroyed the crops, rural industry or working outside the village provided the only

¹⁹ *Ta Kong Pao*, 5 July 1930, p.2.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 12 August 1930, p.2.

income for the peasants. It is no surprise that the heavily waterlogged Baodi county was the center of handicraft weaving in Eastern Hebei (discussed in chapter 4).

Population and total grain production: A supply and demand analysis

There was no scientific land survey and population census in pre-1949 China, thus it is difficult to get the exact land and population data. Table 2-4 summarizes the figures collected by the Eastern Hebei Anti-communist Government to show the land size and population of Eastern Hebei in 1937.

In Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), Eastern Hebei was composed of three parts. The seven counties (Linyu, Funing, Changli, Leting, Qian-an and Luan) located in the most eastern section belonged to Yongping Prefecture. The three centrally located counties (Zunhua, Yutian and Fengrun) belonged to Zunhua Sub-prefecture. The remaining eleven counties in the west part were supervised by Shuntian Prefecture which administered the counties around Beijing. According to one statistic, in 1883, the population in the twenty-one counties in Eastern Hebei (at that time, there was no Xinglong county) was 4,253,700.²¹ By 1936, the population was 6,254,126 (see Table 2-4), that means in about half a century, the net population increase was 2,000,426, or 47 percent of the 1883 figure. As almost all cultivable land was already utilized as farm land in this area by mid-nineteenth century, the population increase deteriorated the land-man ratio. As Table 2-4 shows, in 1936, on average, each household had only

²¹ Huang, *The Peasant Economy*, 323-324, Table B2 and Table B3.

Table 2-4, Land and population in Eastern Hebei, 1936

County	Acreage (mu)	Household	Population	Person/household	Mu/household
Tong	1,089,799	55,188	360,849	6.54	19.75
Zunhua	298,710	50,610	302,570	5.98	5.90
Ji	1,057,125	41,261	285,471	6.92	25.62
Miyun	278,430	26,302	132,809	5.05	10.59
Yutian	554,002	52,990	335,133	6.32	10.45
Sanhe	745,420	39,173	239,085	6.10	19.03
Shunyi	591,886	32,500	163,825	5.04	18.21
Pinggu	211,473	13,660	65,155	4.77	15.48
Huairou	150,000	11,000	86,130	7.83	13.64
Xinglong	47,260	4,702	46,856	9.97	10.05
Luan	2,097,886	100,257	911,572	9.09	20.93
Fengrun	1,579,584	87,120	676,133	7.76	18.13
Linyu	197,026	32,761	195,690	5.97	6.01
Changli	1,553,443	80,680	407,018	5.04	19.25
Funing	366,550	47,494	262,348	5.52	7.72
Leting	636,607	45,999	339,490	7.38	13.84
Qian-an	500,000	59,450	368,850	6.20	8.41
Lulong	224,919	22,434	162,453	7.24	10.03
Baodi	1,585,600	57,097	325,084	5.69	27.77
Changping	635,858	43,380	233,127	5.37	14.66
Ninghe	600,000	40,006	212,034	5.30	15.00
Xianghe	714,190	24,576	142,444	5.80	29.06
Total	15,715,768	968,640	6,254,126	6.46	16.22

Source: Toyo jijo kenkyukai, *kito soran* (General Information of Eastern Hebei) (Tokyo, 1936).

about 16 *mu* land which was not large enough to support a family with 6.46 members.

It is difficult to determine how many people in Eastern Hebei lived on farming, because as in today's China, many rural people had more than one occupation. A farmer might also work as craftsman and do business as a merchant. At the same time,

it is also difficult to decide if a rural household belonged to agricultural, commercial, industrial or other occupational categories because farmers, merchants and industrial workers might live in the same household. In 1936, the Japanese investigators tried to find how many households engaged in different industries. Their findings are shown in Table 2-5.

Table 2-5, Percentage of households according to occupation division, 1936

County	Agriculture	Commerce	Industry	Others
Baodi	97.36%			
Zunhua	93.18	2.89%	1.64%	2.29%
Miyun	90.21			
Pinggu	88.39			
Ninghe	69.04	2.14	26.67	2.15
Changli	63.34			
Xianghe	61.89	2.07	18.35	17.69
Fengrun	60.61	9.90	11.40	18.10
Leting	39.01	13.67	1.68	45.61
Funing	33.17	8.91	4.46	53.46
Linyu	26.18	24.45	31.21	18.16

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on the Investigation of General Conditions of the Sixteen Counties in Eastern Hebei*, see "land and population" section for each county.

The Japanese investigators did not tell us what criterion they used to divide the households into the four professional categories. But, it is obvious that in the three most eastern located counties (Leting, Funing and Linyu), more people engaged in non-farming work than in agriculture. This might be related with their nearness to

Manchuria or found jobs in the port city. Precarious agricultural conditions and low land productivity were the main reasons that so much peasants had to find non-farming works in Eastern Hebei.

Compared with other parts of north China, Eastern Hebei had a shorter growing season (about 180 days) and the index of double-cropping was very low (116.3 in Eastern Hebei, 139.3 in central Hebei and 143.7 in southern Hebei). Although it was located in the winter wheat-kaoling region according to John L. Buck's division,²² winter wheat had little importance in peasants' cropping portfolios. The main crops in this area were sorghum, maize, millet and beans. According to statistics for 1939, the cropping distribution of Eastern Hebei was arranged as follows (see Table 2-6).

Besides the main grain crops, Eastern Hebei also produced some cash crops, such as cotton, peanut and sesame. Under the traditional farming technology and often re-occurring natural disasters, the land productivity was low. According to the same statistics made in 1939, the total production of the main grain crops (sorghum, maize, millet and beans) in Eastern Hebei was 7,523,148 *shi*.²³ In 1939, the total population in Eastern Hebei was 7,164,208.²⁴ On average, each person only had about one *shi* unprocessed grain. No matter how many kilograms a *shi* contains, it is obvious that one *shi* was far short to sustain an individual life.

²² John L. Buck, *Land Utilization in China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937), 27.

²³ Wei Hongyun, ed., *Investigation and Research on Eastern Hebei Village*, 159, Table 18.

²⁴ Shin-min-kai, *Kito chiku fusoku ryokoku chosahyo* (Investigation of Grain Shortage in Eastern Hebei) (Beijing, 1939).

Table 2-6, Percentage of main crops planted in Eastern Hebei, 1939

County	Sorghum	Maize	Millet	Beans	Total
Luan	31.85%	18.69%	15.57%	8.80%	74.91%
Fengrun	24.15	23.99	22.20	15.73	86.07
Tong	13.27	45.39	17.44	11.05	87.15
Changli	37.67	14.87	9.71	15.21	77.46
Leting	59.62	8.17	14.74	5.17	87.70
Qian-an	27.01	5.64	29.14	17.29	79.08
Zunhua	2.58	31.01	28.07	4.13	65.79
Baodi	68.68	11.12	6.62	8.63	95.05
Ji	2.34	11.16	43.54	21.63	78.67
Yutian	51.84	14.90	8.25	9.74	84.73
Funing	34.60	4.46	28.71	3.57	71.34
Linyu	21.51	8.43	18.94	11.82	60.70
Ninghe	82.06	0.72	0.18	0.24	83.20
Miyun	5.18	5.63	58.66	1.04	70.51
Sanhe	14.92	31.43	34.24	4.66	85.25
Lulong	24.04	10.90	19.36	13.68	67.98
Shunyi	14.99	4.03	20.16	19.73	58.91
Xianghe	22.18	45.90	22.42	6.70	97.20
Pinggu	16.16	14.58	24.21	4.17	59.12
Changping	23.47	30.48	30.64	7.98	92.57
Huairou	15.27	16.23	23.23	11.96	66.69
Xinglong	6.22	56.75	25.76	8.69	97.42
Average	31.15	17.61	20.29	11.04	80.09

Source: Wei Hongyun, ed., *Investigation and Research on Eastern Hebei Villages*, 158, Table 17, re-edited by the author.

Table 2-7 clearly shows that Eastern Hebei was a grain shortage area. Among the 22 Eastern Hebei counties, only Luan and Ji had a little grain surplus after their own consumption. The other twenty counties had to import grain from other areas. On average, about 29 percent of the grain consumed in Eastern Hebei was imported.

Table 2-7, Grain production, consumption and shortage in Eastern Hebei
1938-1939 (unit: ton)

County	Production	Consumption	Shortage(-) or surplus (+)	Percentage of shortage
Linyu	9,900	28,000	-18,100	-64.64%
Funing	33,100	43,100	-10,000	-23.20
Changli	42,970	45,200	-2,230	-4.93
Qian-an	10,900	24,500	-13,600	-55.51
Lulong	4,650	7,750	-3,100	-40.00
Luan	56,500	55,100	+1,400	+2.54
Leting	13,300	19,200	-5,900	-30.73
Fengrun	82,600	100,600	-18,000	-17.89
Ninghe	3,300	47,000	-43,700	-92.98
Yutian	24,200	29,400	-5,200	-17.69
Zunhua	24,700	34,900	-10,200	-29.23
Ji	18,400	17,600	+800	+4.55
Xinglong	1,750	2,920	-1,170	-40.07
Sanhe	9,200	13,900	-4,700	-33.81
Pinggu	2,500	3,700	-1,200	-32.43
Tong	25,680	31,300	-5,620	-17.96
Baodi	14,300	25,500	-11,200	-43.92
Xianghe	14,300	17,800	-3,500	-19.66
Shunyi	11,600	18,200	-6,600	-36.26
Huairou	6,200	12,700	-6,500	-51.18
Miyun	12,100	15,600	-3,500	-22.44
Changping	19,360	24,000	-4,640	-19.33
total	441,510	617,970	-176,460	-28.55

Source: Shin-min-kai, *Investigation of Grain Shortage in Eastern Hebei*.

Are the local governmental statistics reliable? The field survey materials gathered by the Japanese will be used to check the governmental statistics. Compared with village level information, it is easy to find that the percentage of main crops of the governmental statistics is correct but the statistics of grain production is a little low (see Table 2-8 and Table 2-9).

Table 2-8, Percentage of main crops in six Eastern Hebei villages, 1936

Village, County	Sorghum	Maize	Millet	Beans	Total
Lujiazhai, Zunhua	32.60%	10.80%	25.30%	6.00%	74.70%
Xiaoying, Miyun	20.00	10.20	30.00	10.00	70.20
Houyansi, Xianghe	7.00	50.00	15.00	15.00	87.00
Xiaoxinzhai, Pinggu	17.00	14.10	44.00	15.30	90.40
Huzhuang, Pinggu	25.00	16.67	25.00	8.33	75.00
Jigezhuang, Ji	48.90	13.20	6.00	8.20	76.30
Average	25.08	19.16	24.22	10.47	78.93

Source: Japanese investigation materials, see report on each village. I use the information of the Western part of Lujiazhai to represent the entire village.

In the seven surveyed villages, the total main grain (including sorghum, maize, millet and beans) production was 2,369,970 *jin* or 1,184,985.5 kg. Excluding 10 percent of the production as seed and feed for domestic animals, on average, each person had about 283.89 *jin* or 142 kg of grain for a year. Of course, even this per-capita grain holding which is much higher than the governmental statistics but not enough to keep one from starvation. Thus, even in the villages, the population had to buy some foodstuffs for consumption. In fact, for a long time, Eastern Hebei imported grain from Manchuria or other parts of China. For example, in 1931, the *Lulong Gazetteer* recorded that “the harvest [of one year] is only six-tenth of what people

Table 2-9, Grain production and per-capita share in seven Eastern Hebei villages
1936 (unit: jin)

Village, County	Population	Production	Seed and feed	Grain per-capita
Lujiazhai	1,171	297,045	2,974	251.13
Xiaoying, Miyun	927	436,000	43,600	423.30
Houyansi, Xianghe	1,809	580,500	58,050	288.81
Jigezhuang, Ji	658	184,620	18,462	252.52
Xiaoxinzhai, Pinggu	890	368,400	36,840	372.54
Huzhuang, Pinggu	1,170	228,500	22,850	175.77
Xiaojie, Tong	983	274,905	27,491	251.69
Total	7,608	2,369,970	210,267	283.87

Source: Japanese investigation materials, see the report on each villages. I convert the grain unit from *dou* or *dan* to *jin* according to each village's weight equality. If the source material did not explain the weight of the local *dou*, I assume 1 *dou* contains 20 *jin*.

Note: The figures for Xiaojin village were for the year of 1935.

consumed, the other part of the foodstuffs is imported from other provinces."²⁵ We can find similar records in other Eastern Hebei county gazetteers.

As a grain shortage region, Eastern Hebei had to produce non-grain products, such as cotton, peanut and fruits, as exports to balance its trading with other parts of China. But one should not exaggerate the importance of cash crops in Eastern Hebei peasants' planting portfolios and their effects on peasants' social and economic structure.²⁶

²⁵ *Lulong xianzhi* (Lulong Gazetteer) (1931), vol.10.

²⁶ As Loren Brandt pointed out, Philip Huang exaggerated the differentiation of productivity between the managerial farmers and petty peasants. Huang argued that cash crop planting stimulated the commercialization of agricultural production and the polarization of the peasant class.

Cash crop planting in Eastern Hebei

As a production and consuming unit, the peasant family was always trying to produce all they needed on their small farms. It is no surprise to find that besides the main crops, the peasants also produced cotton, sesame, peanut and other non-grain crops for their own consumption. Part of these crops were sold to the outside markets. In the period under investigation (1870-1937), as transportation was improved and new seeds were introduced, the percentage of land devoted to cash crop cultivation may have increase a little compared with that in the former decades.

In the nineteenth century, native cotton had already been planted in Eastern Hebei. In Leting and Sanhe counties, cotton and cotton products (cloth and thread) were exported to Manchuria and Jehol. But the spread of American-seed cotton planting in Eastern Hebei was the development of the twentieth century. According to the investigation in Donghongyapo village, Fengrun county, the peasants began to plant cotton in the late Qing period (after 1895). At that time, the government announced the prohibition on the planting of poppy—the most important cash crop in the nineteenth century—and foreign missionaries brought and spread American cotton seed to the peasants there. The former poppy land was transformed to cotton land.²⁷ The Custom Officials at Tianjin noticed this change in land use in their report. “The outstanding feature of the export trade is the great advance made in the shipments of raw cotton

²⁷ Mantetsu, *Kito chiku noson jittai chosaban, Kito chiku nai nijugo noon jittai chosa hokokusho* (Report on the investigation of actual conditions in 25 villages in Eastern Hebei) (here after cited as Mantetsu, *Report on the 25 villages in Eastern Hebei*), 2: 47.

during the year 1910 and 1911, . . . but the increased production is mainly due to the substitution of cotton for poppy cultivation since the prohibition of the later.”²⁸ Ten years later, the Custom officials reported again, “cotton cultivation received a considerable impetus in recent years owing to the development of the spinning industry in North China and the demand for raw cotton in Japan and elsewhere. As the profit to be derived from cotton-growing is nearly double that realized by raising Kaoling [sorghum] or wheat, the people are more and more taking to cotton cultivation.”²⁹ By the early 1930s, three cotton growing areas were developed in Hebei. According to the same Custom report, “cotton produced in Heph [Hebei] may be classified into three kinds according to its districts of production, viz., Hsiho [Xihe, or West River in central and southern Hebei], Yuho [Yuhe, or Royal River, which means the Grand Canal] and Tungpeiho [Dongbeihe, or Northeastern River, which means Jiyun and Luan Rivers in Eastern Hebei], among which the Hsiho variety predominates both in quantity and in quality.”³⁰

Compared with the conditions in central and southern Hebei, the soil and climate in Eastern Hebei were not favorable for cotton growing. Besides the short growing season, the main obstacles to cotton planting in Eastern Hebei were high saline-alkali in the soil and waterlogging in the summer. Although cotton could bring high profit for the cultivators, its planting still had little importance in peasants’

²⁸ C.I.M.C., *Decennial Reports, 1902-11*, 200.

²⁹ C.I.M.C., *Decennial Reports, 1912-21*, 154.

³⁰ C.I.M.C., *Decennial Reports, 1922-31*, .353.

cropping portfolios. Table 2-10 shows that in 1936, only about 6.56 percent of the total land was devoted to cotton growing—the real percentage should be a little lower because some grain crops were interplanted, the total planting mu should be bigger than the total land mu. In the twenty-two counties, Pinggu, Fengrun, Lulong, Qian-an and Zunhua devoted more than 10 percent of its cultivable land to cotton planting, the figures for the later three counties were questionable because all of them located along the Great Wall, the land was poor and not fitted for cotton growing. In fact, the 1930s investigation materials also showed that only Pinggu and Fengrun were important counties for cotton production in Eastern Hebei. But even in Fengrun, cotton planting was limited to the southern part of the county.³¹ Table 2-11 shows the cotton acreage and yields in Fengrun county from 1930 to 1935.

According to the interviews with the peasants made in Fengrun county, under the fair condition of precipitation, 100 jin of unginced cotton (seeded cotton, which could produce about 30 jin of ginned cotton) was the normal yield per mu. As the soil was fertile in Fengrun county and the peasants could buy pig hair and bean-cakes for use as fertilizers there, thus, the yield per mu was a little higher than that in other Eastern Hebei counties.

Cotton planting did bring higher returns compared with other crops, but planting was mainly determined by the ecological conditions, not by the preference of the

³¹ In Fengrun county, cotton was produced in the area south of the Beining Railway line. Xuanzhuang was the producing center, the peasants there could use the water in Xi River to irrigate the cotton land. Mantetsu, Chosabu, *Kita shina menka chosa shiryō* (Investigation materials on cotton production in north China), 47.

Table 2-10, Mu of cotton land and its percentage in the total cultivable land
in Eastern Hebei, 1936

County	Total land (mu)	Cotton land (mu)	Percentage
Tong	1,089,799	36,051	3.31%
Zunhua	298,710	37,216	12.46
Ji	1,057,125	11,419	1.08
Miyun	278,430	8,974	3.22
Yutian	554,002	29,421	5.31
Sanhe	745,420	34,615	4.64
Shunyi	591,886	2,660	0.45
Pinggu	211,473	31,497	14.89
Huairou	150,000	1,443	0.96
Xinglong	47,260	792	1.68
Luan	2,097,886	169,002	8.06
Fengrun	1,579,584	207,473	13.13
Linyu	197,026	1,982	1.01
Changli	1,553,443	68,632	4.42
Funing	366,550	71,450	19.49
Leting	636,607	43,850	6.89
Qian-an	500,000	61,428	12.29
Lulong	224,919	61,238	27.23
Baodi	1,585,600	74,340	4.69
Changping	635,858	4,362	0.69
Ninghe	600,000	42,205	7.03
Xianghe	714,190	31,078	4.35
Total	15,715,768	1,031,128	6.56

Source: About the total land mu, see Table 2-4 in this study. About the cotton land mu, see Hebei sheng mianchan gajin hui, ed., *Hebei sheng mianchan diaocha baogao, 1936* (Report on the Investigation of Cotton Production in Hebei, 1936).

Table 2-11, Cotton planting and yield in Fengrun county, 1930-1935

Year	Acreage (mu)	Yield (ginned cotton, jin)
1930	65,000	1,060,000
1931	70,000	1,627,000
1932	180,000	10,080,000
1933	193,480	9,725,900
1934	214,800	3,800,000
1935	212,000	5,500,000

Source: Mantetsu, *Investigation Materials on Cotton Production in North China*, 48-52.

Note: The yields for the years from 1930 to 1934 are questionable, they were cited from Chinese Cotton-mill Owners Association's estimates, but the acreage and yield for 1935 are reliable, they were derived from the Japanese investigators' field study.

cultivators. In other words, the peasants had few choices in their crop-planting. The cases in Longwo and other villages will show how the location and soil conditions, not the peasants' preferences, determined the cropping portfolio in Yutian county.

In the initial investigation in 1936, Longwo and its neighboring six villages were chosen as the representatives of cotton planting and cloth weaving villages in Eastern Hebei. Longwo, located near the market town of Woluoku, suffered little flood disaster. Xiaowangzhuang, Dongxiaochenzhuang, Xixiaochenzhuang, Xiaojiangzhuang, Mengxinzhuang and Zhimafeng are located 12 *li* northeast of Longwo. Because these six villages were located a little lower and often faced the threat of waterlogging, the peasants there planted less or no cotton, most of the land was devoted to water-resistant sorghum planting. Table 2-12 shows the percentage of land devoted to different crops in the peasants' cropping portfolio.

Table 2-12, Percentage of different crops in seven villages in Yutian county

Village	Cotton	Sorghum	Soybean	Wheat	Others
Longwo	54.20%	28.50%	8.60%		8.60%
Xiaowangzhuang	13.50	59.20	14.30	8.60%	4.30
Dongxiaochenzhuang	25.60	51.20	10.30		12.80
Xixiaoxhenzhuang	25.70	57.10	14.30		2.90
Xiaojiangzhuang	14.20	65.50	10.20		10.20
Mengxinzhuang	16.00	49.50	6.90	13.80	13.80
Zhimageng		65.80	8.10	16.10	10.00
Average	20.40	52.70	10.20	8.30	8.40

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on the 25 villages in Eastern Hebei*, 2:27.

As Table 2-12 shows, in Longwo village, more than half of the cropping land was devoted to cotton planting, but in the nearby Zhimafeng village, no cotton was planted at all. The investigators also found that the price for cotton growing land was twice that for the land which could only plant sorghum. Generally, the cotton growing land was not leased out to the tenants but cultivated by the land owners.³² All these facts contradict Philip Huang's argument that the poorer peasants had a less well-balanced cropping patterns.³³

Besides cotton, peanut and fruits were exported from Eastern Hebei. The nearby big cities (Beijing, Tianjin and Tangshan) and Manchuria provided a good market for these products. According to one investigation made in the early 1930s, in

³² Mantetsu, *Report on the 25 Villages in Eastern Hebei*, 2: 26.

³³ Philip Huang's argument was that the poorer peasants devoted too much or too little land to cash crops than the managerial farmers did. In Huang's view, it was the farmers, not the natural condition, that determined what should be planted on the limited land. See Huang, *The Peasant Economy*, 161-165.

the Beijing market, most of the peanuts sold there came from the surrounding counties. Shunyi was the number one among these providers.³⁴

After Qinghuangdao was opened to foreign trade in 1990, peanuts were exported from there to Manchuria and foreign countries. The Custom Officials reported that “from the statistics published in the Annual Reports, it will be seen that the export of groundnuts was greatly affected by the European War [the first World War], dropping to 3,572 piculs in 1916 , which is about one-tenth of what was exported in 1915. . . . The closing of the European market during the war did not, however, impede its growing, the farmers easily finding a market in Manchuria for their produce after meeting the demand for oil-pressing locally. The groundnuts grown in the Lwanhsien district [Luan county] are claimed as being superior to those produced in any other district : the crop for 1921 is estimated at 140,000 piculs or 40 percent increase on the pre-war crops.”³⁵

Historically, the mountain areas along the Great Wall in the northern part of Eastern Hebei produced many kinds of nuts and fresh fruits, such as walnuts, chestnuts, pear, peaches and apples. Sometimes the merchants of Tianjin went to the producing area personally or sent their representatives there to buy fruits, In the archives of Jianjin Chamber of Commerce, a merchant complained that he was over-charged by the tax collectors when he was buying pears in Qian-an county.³⁶ Among nut and fruit

³⁴ Feng Hefa, ed., *Zhongguo jingji lunwen ji* (Research on Chinese Economy), 276-277.

³⁵ C.I.M.C., *Decennial Reports, 1912-21*, 124.

³⁶ Tianjin dang-an guan, ed., *Tianjin shanghui dang-an huibian* (Archive materials of Tianjin Chamber of Commerce) (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin, 1989-1996), 1: 1480.

producing counties in Eastern Hebei, Changli was famous for its pears and apples. Once again, the Qinhuangdao Custom Reports provide a contemporary observation: “with the exception of the above [walnuts, pears and strawberries produced near Qinhuangdao], practically all the fruit brought to the port for sale locally or for exportation comes from the Changli Hills and vicinity. . . . The Changli pears are of several kinds, some of which are very good. They are the fruit most exported from here, large quantities being sent away every year by steamer.”³⁷ Two decades later, the Customs Officials at Qinhuangdao reported again:

The most important development around Changli has been the great increase in fruit orchards. It is claimed by those who have watched this development that the fruit industry of Changli has developed during the past half century. Until recently, however, most of the fruit was grown on hillside terraces or other poor land. In the past five years many young orchards have been set on good farmland, an indication that the income from fruit is sufficient to justify giving up grainland for fruit.³⁸

It is true that new orchards were developed and fruit products were increased in the twentieth century, but as in cotton production, one should not exaggerate this new development and its importance in the regional economy. Until the 1930s, for most peasants, fruit production was a sideline business, the fruit trees were grown on the mountain sides or on the borders of grain fields. The few fruit orchards were located in the hillsides or poorly terraced land. Both Zhongliangshan and Qianlianggezhuang in Changli county, two villages the Japanese investigators chose as fruit producing representatives, and Philip Huang labeled them as “highly commercialized villages,”

³⁷ C.I.M.C., *Decennial Reports, 1902-11*, 165.

³⁸ C.I.M.C., *Decennial Reports, 1922-31*, 328.

were located in the Changli Hills. In Houjiaying, another Japanese investigated village in Changli county, fruit production was so unimportant that the investigators did not mention it in their reports. Compared with cotton production, operating fruit orchards was an isolated phenomena or sideline production in Eastern Hebei. There was no “specialized fruit-producing family” at that time.³⁹

Grain production could not meet their own consumption, cash crops had little importance in their cropping portfolio and could not be expected to meet the cash needs for grain buying, How could the peasants in Eastern Hebei manage to make a living in such a situation? The Custom Officials in Tianjin noticed that no matter whether the family farm was large or small, all farmers could not make a living on farming alone.

The average yearly receipts of farming family working on a land less than 50 mou [mu] are \$271; over 50 mou, \$417, and over 100 mou, \$779; while their respective estimated expenditure is \$302, \$468, and \$870, leaving a deficit to them in each and every case. They had to eke out their living by undertaking a secondary or side industry, such as hand-weaving, braiding, fowl-farming, stock-raising, bee-keeping and silkworm-breeding, which bring them a little surplus profit, after making up the deficit, of say \$28, \$20, and \$7 for each family, in the above order. From this it may also be deduced the greater that the area of land worked the less the profit gained. This paradox lies in the fact that farmers working on larger tracts of land are oftentimes called on to pay more taxes than those on smaller ones and that their expenditure for the maintenance of the farm and cost of living is far higher.⁴⁰

The figures given by the Custom Officials might be unreliable, but their observation that farming alone could not support a family is accurate for Eastern Hebei. As the above analysis shows, the natural condition (soil and climate) was not favorable

³⁹ “Specialized [cash crop production] family” is a new name for those who produce one or two cash crops, such as cotton or fruit, for the market in the 1980s and 1990s. For these families, the income from cash crops are more important than that from grain productions.

⁴⁰ C.I.M.C., *Decennial Reports, 1922-31*, 354.

for agricultural production in Eastern Hebei. As population increased and the land-man ratio deteriorated, Eastern Hebei had to depend on more imported grain to keep its people from starvation.⁴¹ Rural industry and working outside the village were more important for the peasant economy in Eastern Hebei than in other parts of north China. To understand this importance, agricultural production and farming return will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

⁴¹ After the land reform and collectivization in the 1950s, large scale water conservancy and land-leveling projects changed the agricultural topography of Eastern Hebei, rice, wheat and corn instead of sorghum, millet and beans became the main crops there. In the 1990s, some former grain shortage counties began to export rice and other products.

CHAPTER 3. LITTLE RETURN FROM THE LAND:

INVOLUTION OF AGRICULTURE

In discussing the peasant economy in north China, Philip Huang pointed out that as the population increased, peasants put more and more labor into the limited land. The result was that although the total production increased, the production of labor, also considered as marginal returns by some, was decreasing. He called this phenomena of increasing output and decreasing labor productivity as “agricultural involution.”¹ His research focused on the managerial farms and he concluded that the managerial farms had a higher level of output per labor day than the family farms did.² But in north China villages, less than 5 percent of households could be called managerial farms and they farmed less than twenty percent of the total farming land. To evaluate the productivity of agriculture, all the farming classes, not only the managerial farmers, but also landlords, owner-peasants, owner-tenants and tenants require consideration. This chapter will argue that as a business, farming brought little return on the capital investment and labor input. But, as peasants had few alternatives, they still worked on the land and managed to make a living by a combination of farming and other sideline production.

¹ Huang, *The Peasant Economy*, Chapter 1.

² *Ibid.*, .9.

Land distribution and tenancy in Eastern Hebei

As table 2-4 shows, on average, a household had 16.22 mu of land, which was too small to support a family of six to seven persons. This situation of too little land for too many people was made worse by the unequal land distribution among the farming households. For more than one thousand years, Chinese peasants struggled to get and keep their own lands. The periodic peasant rebellions, such as the Li Zicheng Rebellion in the late Ming and the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864) in the late Qing, were both related to land problems. It is true that compared with the situation in south China, especially with that in the Yangtze Delta, there were more owner-cultivators and fewer tenants in north China. But this is not to say that the land was more equally distributed among the cultivators.

The governmental statistics might overlook the inequality of landownership distribution in Eastern Hebei. According to Hebei provincial governmental statistics (see Table 3-1), in the early 1930s, there were few landlords and tenants in four Eastern

Table 3-1, Percentage of households according to landownership
in four Eastern Hebei counties, 1930s

County	Landlord	Owner-peasant	Owner-tenant	Tenant
Sanhe		90.00%	8.00%	2.00%
Baodi	5.00%	55.00	20.00	20.00
Shunyi	0.19	66.90	30.00	2.90
Pinggu		80.00	10.00	10.00
Average	1.62	72.53	17.18	8.67

Source: Wei Hongyun, ed., *Investigation and Research on Eastern Hebei Villages*, 142, Table 2.

Hebei counties. Totally, more than 70 percent of the farming families worked on their own lands as owner-peasants. This data gives the impression that land was more or less equally distributed among the farming households. But if a close look at the village level is made, the governmental data is questionable. In their village investigations made in the 1930s, the Japanese investigators paid special attention to the question of landownership and farm scales. Their findings make it possible to reconstruct the picture of land distribution in Eastern Hebei. Table 3-2 shows the percentage of owner-peasant, tenant and part-tenant, and year-laborer families in the investigated villages. Among the twenty investigated villages, in only nine villages are the owner-peasant households more than the non-owner-farming households. On average, more than half of the households had to work either as tenants at least part of the time or as farming laborers to support their families.

To arrive at a more accurate information about the land ownership distribution, Table 3-3 and Table 3-4 list the percentage of households and the percentage of land holding according to how much land each household held. These tables show that on average, about 10 percent of the households which had more than 30 mu of land could be called rich peasants or landlords, totally, they held nearly 60 percent of the total cultivable land. About 20 percent of the households were small peasants who held 10 to 30 mu each, as a group, they held about 30 percent of the total land. The other approximately 40 percent of the households which had less than 10 mu each totally held about 13 percent of the total land. The remaining 30 percent of the households

Table 3-2, Percentage of owners, tenant and part-tenant and year-laborers
in twenty Eastern Hebei villages, 1930s and early 1940s

Village and county	Owner-peasant	Tenant and part-tenant	Year-laborer
Huzhuang, Pinggu	89.00%	6.40%	4.60%
Jiaojiazhuang, Fengrun	79.80	14.60	5.60
Longwo, Yutian	75.00	21.40	3.60
Zhongliangshan, Changli	69.10	26.40	4.50
Zhimafeng, Yutian	67.10	3.90	28.90
Jigezhuang, Ji	65.60	22.20	8.50
Baizhuang, Leting	59.80	40.20	0
Houjiaying, Changli	53.40	46.60	0
Houyansi, Xianghe	51.00	38.20	10.80
Dabeiguan, Pinggu	49.00	40.80	10.20
Xiaoying, Miyun	45.00	55.00	0
Shajing, Shunyi	44.80	22.40	32.80
Xiaowangzhuang, Yutian	41.30	32.90	25.80
Qianlianggezhuang, Changli	39.30	43.80	16.90
Donghongyapo, Fengrun	39.20	48.60	12.20
Xiaojie, Tong	30.40	62.20	7.40
Binggezhuang, Funing	29.20	70.80	0
Huzhuang, Ninghe	25.90	61.60	13.00
Michang, Fengrun	14.90	71.50	13.60
Heitingzhuang, Linyu	13.20	76.30	10.50
Average	49.10	40.29	10.45

Source: Mantetsu, Report on each village. Cited and re-edited from Huang, *The Peasant Economy*, 314-320, Table A1-A7.

were landless families in the villages, except a few households engaged in industry or commerce, most of them had to make a living as tenants or farming laborers.

Both Ramon Myers and Philip Huang agree that landownership was very unequally distributed in north China, but they disagree on the trend of land

Table 3-3, Percentage of households according to land holding
in Eastern Hebei villages, 1936

Village and county	30 mu and more	10-30 mu	Less than 10 mu	Landless
Jigezhuang, Ji	10.16%	26.57%	28.91%	34.38%
Huzhuang, Pinggu	7.33	28.91	52.75	11.01
Jiaojiazhuang, Fengrun	8.67	32.14	41.33	17.86
Lujiazhai, Zunhua	9.40	27.73	43.07	19.80
Asuwei, Changping	15.68	35.30	25.49	23.53
Xiaoxinzhai, Pinggu	9.41	16.47	49.41	24.71
Leijiazhuang, Luan	2.56	15.52	35.90	48.72
Houyansi, Xianghe	17.19	71.07	30.93	7.81
Longwo and others, Yutian	5.89	17.32	31.69	45.10
Baizhuang, Leting	16.54	28.22	33.07	21.77
Zhongliangshan, Changli	16.93	25.38	27.69	30.00
donghongyapo, Fengrun	8.99	22.48	29.21	39.33
Xiaoying, Miyun	14.87	14.36	34.87	35.90
Wanggezhuang, Funing	6.66	20.00	63.33	10.00
Huzhuang, Ninghe	23.38	33.76	6.50	36.36
Binggezhuang, Funing	5.37	26.78	27.67	40.18
Heitingzhuang, Linyu	6.74	15.73	15.73	61.80
Total average	9.88	23.25	36.25	30.64

Source: Nakanishi Isao, "Kahoku noson keizai no gaikyo: Kito chiku no tochi bunpai," *Mantetsu chosa geppo*, 18.4 (April 1938), 23.

concentration or de-concentration in the modern period and its causes. Ramon Myers argued that in the twentieth century, as the money inflated and the real land price dropped, some poor peasants bought back their formerly mortgaged lands and the land ownership was more equally distributed in the 1930s than in the earlier decades.³

³ Myers, *The Chinese Peasant Economy*, Chapter 14.

Table 3-4, Percentage of landholding according to how much land they held
in Eastern Hebei villages, 1936

Village, county	30 mu and more	10-30 mu	Less than 10 mu
Jigezhuang, Ji	51.85%	33.62%	14.53%
Huzhuang, Pinggu	29.85	43.57	27.39
Jiaojiazhuang, Fengrun	44.88	40.31	14.81
Lujiazhai, Zunhua	52.43	33.88	13.69
Xiaoxinzhai, Pinggu	67.40	18.40	14.20
Lejjiazhuang, Luan	36.56	34.49	28.95
Houyansi, Xianghe	52.40	38.17	9.43
Longwo and others, Yutian	47.30	35.88	16.82
Baizhuang, Leting	52.83	35.06	12.12
Zhongliangshan, Changli	63.57	28.83	7.60
Donghongyapo, Fengrun	46.09	33.08	11.85
Xiaoying, Miyun	76.23	13.81	9.87
Wanggezhuang, Funing	56.30	22.96	20.74
Huzhuang, Ninghe	74.32	23.82	1.86
Binggezhuang, Funing	50.45	38.01	12.54
Heitingzhuang, Linyu	83.32	12.43	4.25
Total average	57.39	29.35	13.26

Source: Nakanishi Isao, "Kahoku noson keizai no gaikyo: kito chiku no tochi bunpai," *Manetsu chosa geppo*, 18.4 (April 1938), 24.

Philip Huang emphasized that under the development of commercialization of agriculture, few peasants profited from cash crop cultivation and increased their land holdings, but more small peasants failed in the cash crop planting because of its higher risk and thus lost part or all of their lands to become tenants or farming laborers. The

result was the polarization of the rural classes.⁴ Myers mainly drew his samples from the late 1930s and the 1940s. It was an unusual period because of war against the Japanese and the civil war, so the findings in this period should not be used to represent the trend in the twentieth century. Generally speaking, Philip Huang's argument of polarization might be right but the cause should not be solely placed on commercialization. Compared with the former decades, more and more households had less or no land holdings, the main reason was that of population growth without a corresponding increase in cultivable land. Under the equal division of family property among the male descendants, even without natural calamities and human disasters, the former landlords or rich peasants could become small peasants, even landless farming laborers, after several generations. Figure 3-1 shows the land holdings of a Zhang clan in Dabeiguan village, Pinggu county, which demonstrates the process of land division and concentration.

As Figure 3-1 shows, the fourth branch of the Zhang clan (Zhang Chun's descendants) was prosperous in population. Zhang Chun might be glad to have so many grandsons and great-grandsons, but equal division of property among the male descendants left most of them with little land to live on, some of them had to leave the village to make a living in the outside world. Compared with the fourth branch, the third branch (Zhang Fang's descendants) was more prosperous in property than in descendants. Fewer brothers made it possible for them to keep the land under the

⁴ Huang, *The Peasant Economy*, Chapter 6 and Chapter 7.

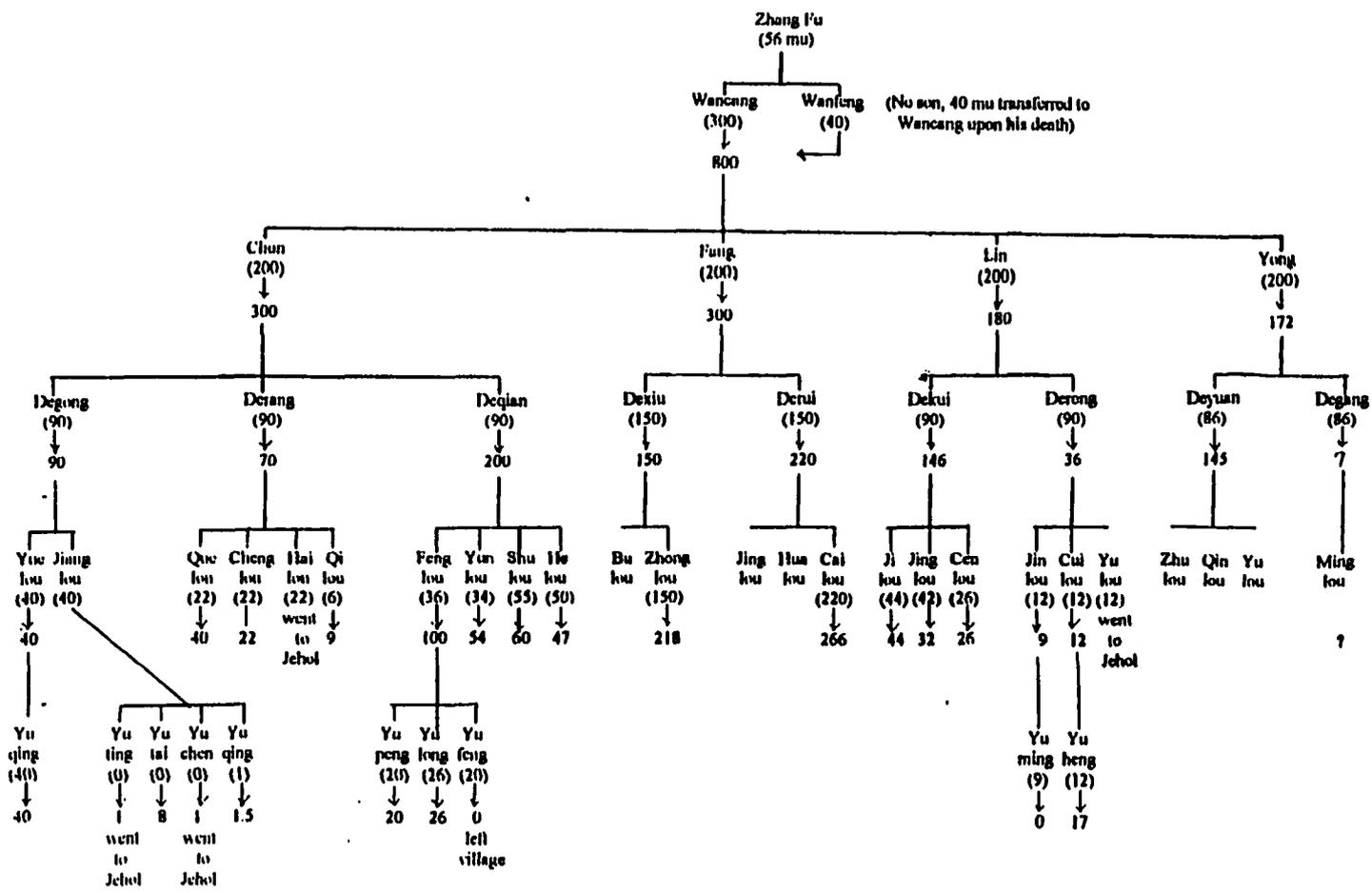


Figure 3-1, Equal division of land in the Zhang clan in Dabeiguan village, Pinggu county
(Source: Mantetsu, *Report on Dabeiguan*, p.10)

family head's management. By the time of the Japanese investigation (1936), the two cousins of Zhang Cailou and Zhang Zhonglou were no. 1 and no.2 landlords in the village. Unquestionably, inheriting was the first fact in the determination of land holding in pre-1949 China, it had the same role in Eastern Hebei.

Of course, there was land buying and selling in the villages. As Philip Huang pointed out, in the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, some peasants "got rich by hard farming" and enlarged their farms. But, compared with other land-buyers, these new rich were few in number and their percentage of land bought in the land market was very low. It is true that commercialization did stimulate land buying and selling and gave impetus to the polarization of land holding in Eastern Hebei, but this commercialization was not the same as Philip Huang use of the term. In Huang's book, commercialization means "cash crop planting," especially cotton cultivation. Here, commercialization includes the development of commercial activity and development of rural industry. In fact, the non-farming income was the main source of capital supply in the land market (going to Manchuria to do business and the rise of new merchant-landlords in Houjiaying village, Changli county, will be discussed in Chapter 5). Table 3-5 shows the land buying by Liu Lihetang (Liu family cooperation, named *Lihetang*) in Kaiping town, Luan county.

The Lius had no land before 1880, they accumulated their wealth probably by trading or office holding (Kaiping was a market town, after 1870, it developed fast as modern style coal mines were opened there). From 1880 on, they began to buy in land.

Table 3-5, Land buying by the Liu Lihetang, 1880-1922

Year	Buying cases	Land bought (mu)	Mu per case
1880	3	55.99	18.66
1881-1885	16	482.06	30.13
1886-1890	9	279.76	31.08
1891-1895	69	940.57	13.03
1896-1900	15	139.08	9.27
1901-1905	49	1,080.46	22.05
1906-1910	113	833.02	7.37
1911-1915	63	412.33	6.54
1916-1920	82	747.24	9.11
1921-1922	3	12.66	3.16
Total	422	4,983.14	11.81

Source: Li Wenzhi, ed., *Source Materials on Agricultural History*, 1: 199.

They not only bought privately owned land (including bannerlands originally owned by individual bannermen), but also bought governmental wasteland (*guanhuang*) and governmental renting land (*guanzhutian*, which was leased to the tenants). As the compiler did not distinguish the private and governmental land in the source table, it is impossible to calculate the percentage of governmental land—which might be larger per piece but lower in price—in the total purchasing. But, close examination reveals that in the twentieth century (except the first five years from 1901 to 1905) the average size of each purchase was much smaller than that in the nineteenth century. This indicates that the land holding of the peasant family became smaller and smaller. This trend was expressed more clearly in the investigation material of Dabeiguan village, Pinggu county (see Table 3-6).

Table 3-6, Average landholding per household and percentage of owner-peasants in three generations in Dabeiguan village

Generation	Decades	Landholding (mu)	Owner-peasant	Owner-tenant
Grandpa's generation	1890s or before	119		
Father's generation	1910s	40	70%	30%
Present generation	1930s	24	50%	50%

Source: Mantetsu, Kito noson jittai chosaban. *Dainiji kito noson jittai chosa hokokusho: tokeihen. Dai ichiban: Heikoku ken* (Report on the Second Investigation of Actual Conditions on Eastern Hebei Villages: Statistical Volume. First Group: [Dabeiguan Village] Pinggu County) (here after cited as Mantetsu, *Report on Dabeiguan*), 6-7.

Assuming twenty years is a generation, Table 3-6 shows that in late nineteenth century, the average land holding per household was more than 100 mu. In the 1910s, the average land holding declined to about 40 mu. By the time of the Japanese investigation (1936), on average, each household only had 24 mu. The reason is simple: population growth without a proportionally increase in land. As more families owned too little or no land, they had to rent land from the few who had more land than they could farm. The result was that in the 1910s, about 70 percent of the total households were owner-farmers, but one generation later, only half of the households were classified as owner-farmers.

The unequal distribution of landownership means that some households had too much and others had none or not enough land to cultivate for their family members. At the same time, the fragmented strips of land owned by a family also made it inconvenient and inefficient for the owner to farm. Eastern Hebei peasants solved these

problems by renting nearby land and leasing out the surplus or far-located land (especially those located in other villages). Through this renting in or leasing out tenancy, the farmed land was redistributed among the cultivators more rationally.

Ramon Myers pointed out that:

The land tenure system must be considered as a system to equalize land use by informal agreement. It functioned to enable peasants with little land to farm and those who could not farm their land efficiently to earn income by leasing it. Because a peasant's farm consisted of many small plots haphazardly located about the village, he found it advantageous to rent a nearby plot from another who found it too difficult or inconvenient to farm. In many instances this meant poorer peasants rented inferior land, and the wealthier peasants farmed their superior land more efficiently.⁵

It is true that many peasants in Eastern Hebei leased out or rented in lands (as table 3-2 shows, about 40 percent farming households in Eastern Hebei rented part or all of their farming lands), but Ramon Myers might exaggerate the farming land redistributing role of tenancy. In fact, tenancy could not "equalize land use" in pre-1949 China. Table 3-7 shows the percentage of households according to how much land they farmed.

Comparing tables 3-3, 3-4 and 3-7, it can be seen that through leasing and renting, farm land was a little more equally distributed among the farming households than the ownership was distributed. About 11 percent "large scale" farmers (each farmed 30 mu or more) farmed 43 percent of the total land, compared to about 10 percent of the rich peasants (each owning 30 mu or more) who had 57 percent of the cultivable land. Due to population pressure, however, there was little land that could be

⁵ Ramon Myers, *The Chinese Peasant Economy*, 48.

Table 3-7, Percentage of households and land farmed according to the size of farms

Village and county	30 mu and more		10-30 mu		Less than 10 mu	
	Household	Land	Household	Land	Household	Land
Jigezhuang, Ji	15.47%	51.85%	40.48%	33.62%	44.04%	14.53%
Xiagezhuang, Pinggu	7.67		23.92		68.04	
Jiaojiazhuang, Fengrun	10.92	36.86	46.05	49.99	43.03	13.15
Lujiazhai, Zunhua	11.45	45.19	40.35	40.47	48.20	14.34
Asuwei, Changping	12.50	12.50	46.15	46.15	41.35	41.35
Leijiazhuang, Luan	7.14	39.74	23.81	31.67	69.05	28.59
Longwo and others, Yutian	9.18	37.43	32.14	42.16	58.67	20.41
Baizhuang, Leting	20.69	57.20	39.08	31.12	40.23	11.67
Zhongliangshan, Changli	21.91	49.09	52.38	44.93	25.71	5.98
Donghongyapo, Fengrun	15.39	40.95	46.15	44.44	28.47	14.61
Xiaoying, Miyun	17.94	56.19	45.51	34.85	36.55	8.94
Wanggezhuang, Funing	6.12	15.89	59.18	71.66	34.69	12.45
Binggezhuang, Funing	8.70	27.03	54.34	56.58	36.96	16.39
Balizhuag, Luan	4.05	18.27	20.23	40.21	75.72	41.51
Total average	11.09	42.56	35.55	42.08	53.36	15.36

Source: Nakanishi Isao, "Kahoku noson keizai no gaikyo: kito chiku no tochi bunpai," *Mantetsu choso geppo*, 18.4 (April 1938), 37.46.

leased out to the families needing land, about half of the households still farmed less than 10 mu per family. Most of them were part- or full-tenants.

In Eastern Hebei, the land was rented yearly. The poor people always approached the prospective landlord through a middle-man after the autumn harvesting but before the spring planting. The amount of rent was decided by the location and productivity of the land. Generally speaking, the rent was always 10 percent of the

contemporary value of the rented land.⁶ People rented land by oral agreement and there was few written contracts.

There were three kinds of rent agreements or rent-paying styles. The first one was share-cropping, the harvest was shared by the landlord and the tenant. They often divided the products equally. The second kind was fixed rent-in-kind, the amount of product paid as rent was decided when the rent agreement was reached. The last one was fixed-cash rent paying. The tenant was required to pay part of the cash-rent before using the land and pay the rest after the harvesting. In the nineteenth century, as commerce was undeveloped, the share-cropping and fixed rent-in-kind were popular options. By the 1930s, fixed cash-rent paying became the main rent paying style. This was the result of commercialization and the insistence of the landlords. Fixed cash-rent paying made it possible for the landlords to have a fixed income regardless of the harvesting and the commercialization made it possible for the peasants to sell their products and for those who lived on cash-rent to buy what they needed at the markets.

Was it worth working on the farms—regardless of whether one owned or rented the land? To answer this question, other investigation materials must be analyzed because the first Japanese investigation in 1936 for 25 villages included little

⁶ *Beining tielu yanxian jingji diaocha baogao* (Report of the Beining Railway Economic Survey Team) (Beijing, 1936), 417; Mantetsu, Tenshin jimusho chosaka, *Kita shina ni okeru mensakuchi noson jijo: kahokusei tonken chogai son* (Report on the conditions of cotton-growing area in north China: Xiaojie village, Tong county, Hebei province) (here after cited as Mantetsu, *Report on Xiaojie*), 8-60. To support his argument that returns for managerial farmers were much higher than what the landlords got from their leased lands, Philip Huang underestimated the returns on leased out lands. Yearly rent income was only about 5 percent of the land value in Michang village (Huang, *The Peasant Economy*, 173) should be regarded as an exception.

information about household income and expense. Before dealing with that problem, another element of agriculture will be discussed—the working animals and the farming tools.

Few working animals and simple farming tools in Eastern Hebei

As about half of the peasants in Eastern Hebei farmed less than 10 mu of land, it is no surprise to learn that most of the farmers there raised no working animals, such as horse, mule, donkey or ox. Table 3-8 gives the numbers of the households and working animals and households in nine Eastern Hebei villages.

Table 3-8, Households and working animals in nine Eastern Hebei villages

1935-1936

Village and county	Households	Working animals	Working animal/household
Xiaoying, Miyun	199	121	0.61
Jigezhuang, Ji	128	35	0.27
Xiagezhuang, Pinggu	518	426	0.82
Xiaoxinzhai, Pinggu	170	65	0.38
Huzhuang, Pinggu	218	133	0.61
Longwo and others, Yutian	199	77.5	0.39
Baizhuang, Leting	124	23	0.19
Zhongliangshan, Changli	130	27	0.21
Xiaojie, Tong	131	45	0.34
Total	1,817	952.5	0.52

Source: Mantetsu, report on each village.

The Japanese investigators selected Xiaoying village in Miyun county as a case study to show domestic animal raising in the peasant economy in Eastern Hebei. Table 3-9 shows that in Xiaoying village, most landlords and owner-peasants raised one or more working animals, about half of the owner-tenants had one donkey or mule. Few tenants and tenant-laborers raised their own working animals. The reason for many peasants having no working animals was obvious: it was too expensive to buy and raise a working animal. According to the investigation, the prices for an ox, mule or donkey were 30-35 yuan, 35-65 yuan and 20-30 yuan respectively in 1936.⁷ Not including the labor cost, the feed (stalks and beans) for the animals for one year is shown in Table 3-10.

Table 3-9, Domestic animal raising in the farming households in Xiaoying village
1936

Farming group	Households	Land (mu)	Working animals	Pigs	Mu/working animals
Landlords	14	746	30	63	24.87
Owner-peasants	10	434	19	36	22.87
Owner-tenants	92	1,522	40.5	155	37.59
Tenants	7	146	2	10	73.00
Tenant-laborers	22	176	2.5	15	70.0
Total	145	3,025	94	279	32.18

Source: Mantetsu, Tenshin jimusho chosaka, *Miyun ken shoeison xianghe ken houyanji noson chosa hokoku* (Report On the Investigation of Actual Conditions of Xiaoying Village in Miyun County and Houyansi Village in Xianghe County) (here after cited as Mantetsu, *Report on Xiaoying* or *Report on Houyansi*), 106-107.

⁷ Mantetsu, *Report on Xiaoying*, 113-114. The price of a donkey was half of the price for a mule.

Table 3-10, Cost of working animal raising in Xiaoying village, 1936

Working animal	Beans (jin)	Stalks (jin)	Salt (jin)	Total cost (yuan)
Ox	200	5,000	13	34.30
Mule	1,500	3,000	5	66.50
Donkey	750	1,500	2.5	33.25

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on Xiaoying*, 108-110.

Note: The cost for raising donkey was half of that for raising a mule.

What was the importance of domestic animal raising in the peasant economy?

Philip Huang argued that there was little or no differentiation in animal use in managerial farming and family farming because those who raised no draft animals could share animals with those who raised or rented work-teams from others.⁸ The Japanese investigators found many reports of animal-sharing or renting in their investigations.⁹ In Eastern Hebei, as in other parts of China, under the population pressure, there was neither public green land for animal grazing nor surplus grain for animal raising. Most farm work was done by human labor instead of animal labor. For example, the weeding work was done by men or women, using small hoes, instead of cultivation by animal power as in the Western World. The animal power was mostly used in plowing and transportation. Under this situation, even with half of the farming families raising no working animals, there was no animal power shortage in planting and harvesting. But, the ox, mule or donkey not only provided draft power, it also

⁸ Huang, *The Peasant Economy*, Chapter 8.

⁹ Mantetsu, *Report on the 25 Villages in Eastern Hebei*, especially on Baizhuang and Heitingzhuang.

contributed in fertilizer making in China. Philip Huang has already pointed out that “the other main benefit of maintaining more farm animals was the added fertilizer they produced. As is well known, dung was generally mixed with earth and garbage (in a ratio of 3:7) to make compost.”¹⁰ But he argued against Asachi Keiji’s analysis that more animals raised in the managerial farms contributed to their higher land productivity because more compost was produced and spread on the land.¹¹ Huang’s evidence came from his calculation about how much land farmed by per unit of draft animal (“donkey equivalent” as he termed) for the managerial farms and that for the whole village. No matter how accurate his calculation was, his conclusion was questionable because he disregarded a simple fact: as animal dung was the main or only source for compost making, where did these small peasants who raised no animals get their fertilizer? In pre-1949 China, chemical fertilizer was out of the reach for the peasants in Eastern Hebei, only a small number of peasants in a few isolated villages could buy pig hair or bean-cake (the sideline products of bristle-processing and oil-pressing industry) as fertilizer. Michang village in Fengrun county was one of these lucky villages because it was near Hetou—a bristle processing and transportation center. Unfortunately, Philip Huang choose Michang as an example to demonstrate there was no differentiation in fertilizer use and land productivity between managerial farmers and small peasants. To demonstrate the relationship of land productivity and fertilizer use, new materials and more research are needed.

¹⁰ Huang, *The Peasant Economy*, 147.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 153.

Compared with the importance of animal raising and animal power use in agricultural productivity, farming tools had little or no effect on the peasant's economy in Eastern Hebei. In fact, only a few investigators in the 1930s included farming tools in their calculation of farming expenses and incomes. The reason is that the farming tools were very primitive and they comprised very little of the peasants' total investment. Generally, the small peasants only had several simple tools which were necessary in farming but had little money cost. For example, a poor peasant who farmed 6 mu in Yutian county had only a sickle, a pick and a hoe, the total value for these three tools was 0.65 yuan. The only farming tool for another poor peasant who farmed 3.6 mu was a sickle priced at 0.1 yuan.¹² The reason is simple: for these small peasants who farmed less than 10 mu, it was not economical to buy a set of all kinds of farming tools. They could share or borrow tools from each other when planting or harvesting. Even for the managerial farmers, they also used the same simple farming tools and paid no attention to innovating their farming technology. Liu Jintan, a managerial farmer who had 110 mu of land and hired four year-laborers in Longwo village had 73 pieces of farming tools, the total value of which was 85.46 yuan. If the price of transportation equipment, grain containers, grain or cotton processing implements (i.e., a cart, 40 yuan; 30 grain bags, 16 yuan; a stone mill, 4 yuan and a cotton gin, 16 yuan) were excluded from the total value, the money value for the 40

¹² Mantetsu, *Report on the 25 villages in Eastern Hebei*, 35-38.

pieces of real farming tools was 15.46 yuan.¹³ It was less than the price for 1 mu of land.

Since there were few working animals, the farming tools were primitive and simple, and there was no large scale cooperation, farming in Eastern Hebei in the 1930s had changed little from that in the nineteenth century or before, it was a continuation of traditional agriculture. The Custom officials at Tianjin observed that

The agricultural methods have shown little advance on the primitive forms of centuries ago, and no modern machinery of any kind has been employed in cultivation. . . . The only power employed, besides human labor, has been supplied by animals, and these, unfortunately, were commandeered on many occasions by the troops for military operations during the strifes which occurred in nearly every year of the decade [1920s]. The productivity of the land was thus reduced to a minimum.¹⁴

Agricultural calendar and labor supply

Besides land, working animals and farming tools, human labor was the other important element in agricultural production. In Eastern Hebei, the growing season is only about 180 days, thus agricultural production is a seasonal activity. In the long winter season, the earth is frozen and the farmers can do nothing in the fields. To determine if there was a labor shortage or surplus, the agricultural calendar and labor supply need an examination.

As discussed in chapter 2, the main subsistent crops in Eastern Hebei were sorghum, maize, millet and beans. Besides the grain crops, in some villages, people also produced wheat, cotton and peanuts, mostly for the market. These were the main

¹³ *Ibid.*, 35-38.

¹⁴ C.I.M.C., *Decennial Reports, 1922-31*, 352.

Table 3-11, Planting and harvesting schedules in Miyun and Linyu counties, 1930s

Crops	<u>Miyun county</u>		<u>Linyu county</u>	
	Planting	Harvesting	Planting	Harvesting
Sorghum	4/15—5/15	9/15—10/15	4/10—5/10	9/1—9/20
Millet	4/15—5/15	9/15—10/15	4/1—4/30	9/10—10/10
Maize	4/15—5/15	8/15—9/15	4/1—5/20	9/1—9/20
Beans	5/15—5/31	9/15—10/15	4/10—5/20	9/20—10/20

Source: *Report of the Beining Railway Economic Survey Team*, 419, 1659.

Note: All beginning and ending dates are approximate.

cash crops in this area. Table 3-11 shows the planting and harvesting schedules of the main crops in two Eastern Hebei counties.

As table 3-11 shows there is little difference in the schedules between the two counties. In reality, as a sub-region of north China, there was little timing difference in agricultural activities in the twenty-two counties. Almost all of the farmers in this area began to plant in April and ended harvesting in October (except for cotton). This uniformity eliminated the possibility of transitional working from one place to another in busy seasons. The field survey material showed that except for a few year-laborers who came from other counties, most of the day-laborers were hired from the same or nearby villages of the employers.

Before discussing how much labor was needed to work on one mu of land, it is necessary to unify the labor and work units. According to the Beining Railway economic survey team's investigation, the local people regarded an adult male as a full laborer and the work completed by an adult male in one day as a labor-day-work. In the

Table 3-12, Labor-day needed to farm on 4 mu of land
in Fengrun and Luan counties, 1930s

Kinds of work	Labor-day needed
Transporting and spreading fertilizer	4
Planting	5
Weeding	6
Cultivating	1
Harvesting	3
Transporting the harvest	4
Threshing	4
Total	27

Source: *Report of the Beiming Railway Economic Survey Team*, 1360, 1431.

1930s, in both Fengrun and Luan counties, peasants used four mu as a farming land unit for a laborer. They thought farming on the four mu of land for the main crops needed the following work days (see Table 3-12).

Table 3-12 shows that farming four mu of land needed twenty-seven labor-days. Thus, working on one mu required 6.75 labor days. Theoretically, if a farm laborer worked 200 days a year, he could farm about 30 mu of land. But in fact, because the labor-need in agriculture was not equally distributed and the workable days were limited to specific activities such as planting, weeding and harvesting, the workable land for a farm laborer is less than 30 mu. In Lujiashai village, Zunhua county, the villagers told the investigators that an adult male laborer could farm 10 mu of land.¹⁵

¹⁵ Mantetsu, Tenshin jimusho chosaka, *Junka ken rolasai noson jittai chosa hokoku* (Report on the investigation of actual conditions of Lujiashai village, Zunhua county), 164.

As about half of the farms in Eastern Hebei were less than 10 mu and almost all families had at least one adult male laborer, so most households had more labor than their family farming needed. But for the rich peasants, especially the landlords who had more than 50 mu of land, even though they hired year-laborers to live and work along with their family members, in the busy season, they still felt a shortage of labor. Figure 3-2 shows the labor-day distribution for three kinds of production models in Michang village, Fengrun county.

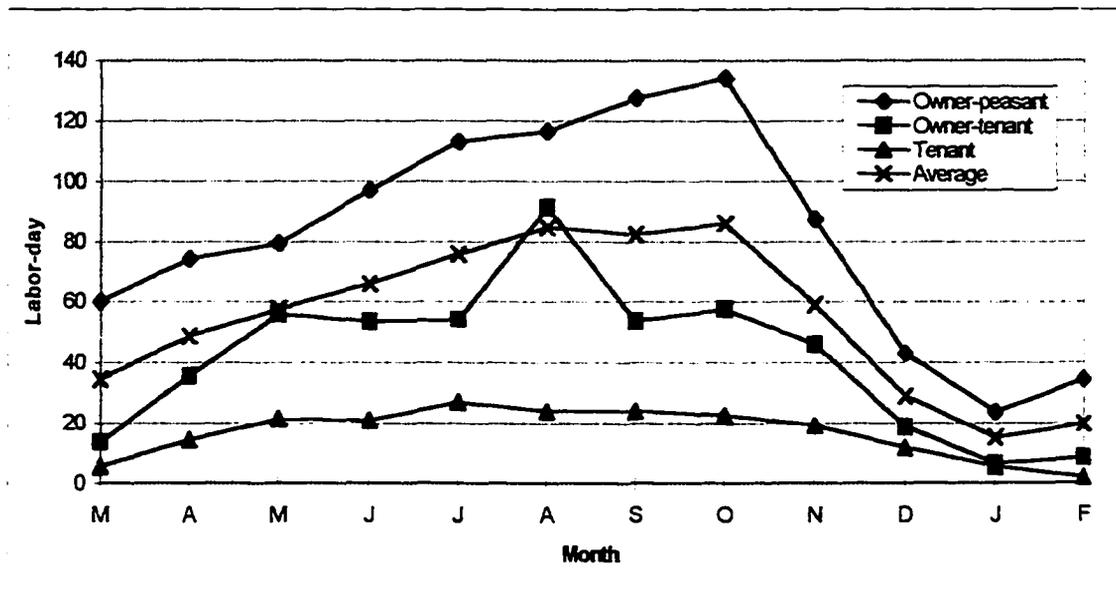


Figure 3-2, Labor-days distribution in Michang Village, Fengrun county

(Source: Mantetus, *Report on Michang for 1937*)

As Figure 3-2 shows, the agricultural season began in March and the labor need increased as the spring planting began in April. In the three months of June, July and August, the peasants weeded and cultivated the sorghum, millet, maize, beans and cotton, the labor need still increased. The labor need reached its highest peak in harvesting time, September and October. In November, as the harvest ended and the winter came, little labor was needed in the field. The three months of the winter season—December, January and February—saw little or no labor need as the earth was frozen. The chart also shows that for the tenants, the labor need was equally distributed. The highest labor need was in July but it was a little higher than twenty labor-days only, there was no need for them to hire help hands. The owner-tenants needed about sixty labor-days from May to October (the investigators did not explain why 90 labor-days were needed in August, I treat it as exceptional), if the family had two adult males, it might be enough for them to do the work. But if the family had only one adult male laborer, it had to hire month or day laborers in the busy months. The owner-peasants demanded more labor than their families could supply (assuming the family had two adult male laborers and could supply sixty labor-days each month), so most of them hired year-laborers to work on the land. As the labor need still increased from May to October, they sometimes hired day-laborers, especially in the harvesting season. In 1937, on average, the owner-peasants hired three year-laborers and one month-laborers, the owner-tenant employed one year laborer (0.7 year-laborer and 0.3

month-laborer), the tenants used no year- or month-laborer.¹⁶ Besides the above long-term laborers, the owner-peasants, the owner-tenants and the tenants employed 72, 27 and 24 day-laborers (labor-days) respectively.¹⁷

The above analysis supports a conclusion: in Eastern Hebei, the labor surplus or shortage was relative to different production groups. For the owner-peasants, especially for the large-scale land owners, they had to employ outside laborers, such as year and month laborers, plus some day-laborers in the busiest months. For the tenants, because their farms were too small, although they some times also employed day-laborers (for labor exchange), they always felt there was not enough land to work on and they had to find outside employment for their surplus labor, especially in the slack season. In reality, in Eastern Hebei, the year-laborer could only work ten months in a year. They always were employed from March to December (from fifteenth day of the first month to the fifteenth day of the eleventh month in the Chinese lunar calendar).¹⁸ The poor people had to find odd jobs in the winter to supplement their family income.

Agricultural production: A cost and return analysis

As a business, farming brought little or no return for the farmers. According to the Japanese investigation, after one year's hard work, for almost all peasants, the

¹⁶ Mantetsu, Hokushi jimukyoku chosabu, *Noka keizai chosa hokoku: Hojun ken sosochin michangson* (Report on the investigation of peasant household economy: Michang village, Fengrun county) (here after cited as *Report on Michang for 1937* or *Report on Michang for 1938*), for 1937, p.3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹⁸ *Report of the Beining Railway Economic Survey Team*, 117.

Table 3-13, Farming cost and income in Michang village, 1937

Peasant group	Gross-income	Production-cost	Net-income
Owner-peasant (7 households average)	1,172.74	754.69	418.05
Owner-tenant (3 households average)	360.07	385.27	-25.21
Tenant (4 households average)	124.77	169.91	-45.14
Total (14 households average)	699.17	508.45	190.72

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on Michang for 1937*, 27.

harvest was not enough to support one's family. Table 3-13 shows how disappointing the farming result was for the peasants in Michang village, Fengrun county.

In Michang village, except the owner-peasants (most of them were landlords or rich peasants), the owner-tenants and the tenants (most of them were middle and poor peasants) got no return for working.¹⁹ In Xiaojie village, Tong county, the peasant got a little return from farming but it was far less than what the peasant needed for living. Table 3-14 shows the agricultural income and family expenses for eleven sample households.

If farming did bring negative income for peasant families as Tables 3-13 and 3-14 indicate, how could the peasant economy continue to run in such a negative situation? A close look at the investigators' calculations suggests that their analysis was questionable. They used the capitalist cost and return booking model to analyze Chinese peasant economy. By this method, they exaggerated the farming cost for the

¹⁹ Owner-peasant, owner-tenant and tenant were the terms used by the Japanese investigators. They called these who owned eighty percent or more of their farmed lands as owner-peasants, those who owned less than twenty percent of their farmed lands as tenants, the rest were called owner-peasants.

Table 3-14, Agricultural income and family budget in Xiaojie village, 1935

(unit: yuan)

Household	Gross-farming income	Total-farming cost	Net-farming income	Total income	Living cost	Family balance
Household 1	2,468.16	2,139.50	328.66	531.16	687.70	-156.54
Household 2	801.49	567.37	234.12	234.12	257.78	-23.66
Household 3	300.67	162.67	138.00	138.00	207.88	-69.88
Household 4	205.02	232.63	-27.61	7.39	180.22	-172.83
Household 5	183.72	118.86	64.86	64.86	176.61	-111.75
Household 6	490.52	281.74	208.78	208.78	333.19	-124.41
Household 7	263.56	215.72	47.84	47.84	195.16	-147.32
Household 8	141.43	95.01	46.42	46.42	95.50	-49.08
Household 9	184.80	95.46	89.34	89.34	90.80	-1.46
Household 10	289.95	184.42	105.53	153.53	133.53	20.00
Household 11	166.38	149.73	16.65	16.65	113.25	-96.60
Total	5,495.70	4,243.11	1,252.59	1,538.09	2,471.62	-933.53

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on Xiaojie*, 222-228.

Note: "Total income" included net-farming income and non-farming income, such as remittance from outside employees and rent from leasing land.

peasants. Table 3-15 shows how they calculated the production cost for the Michang peasants. In their calculation, the "farming cost" included the cost for fertilizer, feed for domestic animals, seeds, labor cost for draft animals, depreciation of farming tools, paying for the hired laborers, rent and taxes. The percentage of these categories in the total cost is presented in Table 3-16.

Table 15, Farming cost in Michang village, 1937 (unit: yuan)

Peasant group	Farming-cost	Family-labor-cost	Total cost
Owner-peasant (7 households average)	644.41	110.28	754.69
Owner-tenant (3 households average)	239.52	145.76	385.27
Tenant (4 households average)	93.96	75.95	169.91
Total (14 households average)	400.37	108.07	508.45

Source: Mantetsu, *Report of Michang for 1937*, 2-25.

Table 3-16, Percentage of fertilizer, hired-labor, rent and taxes
in farming cost in Michang village, 1937

Peasant group	Fertilizer	Hired-labor	Rent	Taxes	Miscellaneous
Owner-peasant	25.40%	50.90%	1.40%	8.90%	13.40%
Owner-tenant	34.70	28.30	19.50	5.90	11.60
Tenant	32.30	8.40	47.00	1.10	11.20
Total-average	27.10	45.20	6.70	8.00	13.00

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on Michang for 1937*, 2-25.

Note: As in Table 3-13, the farming cost percentage were the average for the three peasant groups respectively.

Table 3-16 shows that for all peasants, about thirty percent of the farming cost was spent for fertilizer, but the cost for hired-labor and rent were different for the three groups. For the owner-peasants, half of the farming cost was used to hire farming hands. For the tenants, the main cost was paying the rent. As most of these costs were paid in cash, there was no question about the farming cost, the problem lies in the “family-labor-cost” in Table 3-15.

According to the investigators, the family-labor-cost equaled the amount of calculated family adult male labor work-days multiplied by labor-day price (\$0.45 in 1937). Obviously, this was not the real cash paid to the family laborers but a “supposed labor cost”. Table 3-17 shows the net-farming income after the family-labor-cost is deducted from the production cost.

Table 3-17, Net farming income after deducting “family-labor-cost”
in Michang village, 1937 (unit: yuan)

Peasant group	Gross-farming-income	Farming-cost	Net-farming-income
Owner-peasant	1,172.74	644.41	528.33
Owner-tenant	360.07	239.52	120.55
Tenant	124.77	93.96	30.81
Total average	699.17	400.37	298.80

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on Michang for 1937*, 25.

Comparing Table 3-17 with Table 3-13, we find the secret for peasant economy. This secret is that when engaging in agricultural production, most peasants (especially the owner-tenants and the tenants) did not calculate their family labor as a production cost. If they equated their family labor to cash cost according to market labor price as the Japanese investigators did, they would get a negative income for their year’s work. In reality, under the population pressure, family labor was not worth the marketing labor price. As the famous Russian peasantologist A. V. Chayanov pointed out, peasants tend to think of their household’s total labor input for the year as a single unit,

and of the year's harvest after production expenses as a single lump-sum labor product or net income.²⁰ Philip Huang also realized that "it is difficult to assign a value to the family's own labor and to deduct that value from the year's net income to arrive at something akin to a net profit."²¹

Similarly, the total income and budget of Xiaojie village (Table 3-14) needs to be adjusted. In Xiaojie, about 95 percent of the living-cost was spent for food, clothing and heating, and spending on food alone composed 78 percent. This means there was little or no waste in the peasant's expenditures and it was impossible to reduce the living cost any further. The problem lies in the "total income". As the total income was determined by "net-agricultural-income", it should be re-checked. According to the investigators' explanation, the "net-agricultural-income" was the result of gross agricultural income deducted by farming cost which included the cost for seed, fertilizer, paying for hired labor, feeding for domestic animals, rent, taxes, cost for land use and interest on borrowed money. Because the borrowed money was not used for agricultural production, it should not be included in the farming cost. Also, in reality, there was no paying for land use if the land was owned by the farmers. After deducting the interest on borrowed money and cost for land use from the farming cost, Table 3-14 could be adjusted as Table 3-18.

Comparing Table 3-18 with Table 3-14, it is clear that although the cost for land use and interest on borrowed money were deducted from the farming cost, thus

²⁰ Cited from Huang, *The Peasant Economy*, 187.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 187-188.

Table 3-18, Adjusted agricultural income and family budget
in Xiaojie village, 1935 (unit: yuan)

Household	Gross-agricultural income	Farming cost	Net-agricultural income	Total income	Living cost	Family balance
Household 1	2,468.16	1,263.00	1,205.16	1,407.66	687.70	719.96
Household 2	801.49	466.87	334.62	334.62	257.78	6.84
Household 3	300.67	145.67	155.00	155.00	207.88	-52.88
Household 4	205.02	187.63	17.39	52.39	180.22	-127.83
Household 5	183.72	82.86	100.86	100.86	176.61	-75.75
Household 6	490.52	253.74	236.78	236.78	333.19	-96.41
Household 7	263.56	187.72	75.84	75.84	195.16	-119.32
Household 8	141.43	50.01	91.42	91.42	95.50	-4.08
Household 9	184.80	93.46	91.34	91.34	90.80	0.54
Household 10	289.95	180.42	109.53	157.53	133.53	24.00
Household 11	166.38	129.73	36.65	36.65	113.25	-76.6-
Total	5,495.70	3,041.11	2,454.59	2,740.09	2,471.62	268.47

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on Xiaojie*, 222-228.

increasing the family net agricultural income, there was still seven households whose living expenses surpassed their total income. To find who had a negative balance and what caused these short incomes, the 11 households are divided into three groups as the Japanese investigators did for the sample households in Michang villages.²² Their average net agricultural incomes are presented in Table 3-19.

Comparing Table 3-19 with Table 3-17, it is easy to find that the amount of peasant's net agricultural income was determined by how much land he owned. On average, the income of the owner-peasant was several times of that for the tenant.

²² About the criterion, see note 19 in this chapter.

Table 3-19, Average net agricultural income for 11 households in Xiaojie

1935 (unit: yuan)

Peasant group	Gross-agricultural income	Farming cost	Net-agricultural income
Owner-peasant (3 households average)	1,137.03	593.29	543.74
Owner-tenant (5 households average)	280.97	159.94	121.03
Tenant (3 households average)	226.59	153.84	72.75
Total (11 households average)	499.61	276.46	223.15

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on Xiaojie*, 222-228.

To evaluate the returns for farming as a business, it is assumed that land was the only investment and net agricultural income was the only return for the year. Using those assumptions, Table 3-20 shows the results.

The Japanese investigators did not explain how they calculated the land value, especially for the rented land, but the result of Table 3-20 is clear. For the owner-peasant, the yearly income from farming (net agricultural income) was only about

Table 3-20, Average returns of agricultural investment in Michang, 1937

Peasant group	Land-farmed (mu)	Land-value (yuan)	Net-agri.-income (yuan)	Return from investment
Owner-peasant	72.72	4,606.42	528.33	11.47%
Owner-tenant	26.73	921.02	120.55	13.09
Tenant	13.15	263.50	30.81	11.69
Total average	45.85	2,575.86	298.80	11.60

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on Michang for 1937*, 4, 6-7, 22.

twelve percent of the land value. That means it was only a little higher than the income of rent if they leased the land to others (as noted earlier, the rent often was ten percent of the contemporary land value). To check this conclusion, the farming return in Xiaojia village can also be examined (see Table 3-21).

Table 3-21, Farming return for owner-peasant in Xiaojie, 1935

Household	Land-owned (mu)	Land-value (yuan)	Net-agri.-income (yuan)	Return from investment
Household 1	251	9,530	1,205.16	12.65%
Household 8	16	580	91.42	15.76
Total	267	10,110	1,296.58	12.82

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on Xiaojie*, 204.

Table 3-21 shows that the return for agricultural investment was about twelve percent of the land value for household 1 (a managerial farm as Philip Huang called), it was a little higher than the rent income—Household 1 leased 11 *mu* middle-grade land, the land value was 450 yuan, the rent was 52.50 yuan, or 11.67 percent of the land value²³—but much less than the interest on the lending of money. In Eastern Hebei, the yearly interest on the lending money was always 20 percent or higher. The same household in Xiaojie (Household 1) borrowed 2000.00 yuan in an emergency (the household was robbed by bandits), the yearly interest was 20 percent. At this time, it is difficult to know the return from investment in commerce or industry. But compared

²³ Mantetsu, *Report on Xiaojie*, 204, 223.

with leasing land and lending money, farming brought less and uncertain returns for the farmers because the rent and interest was pre-fixed and had to be paid regardless of the natural or man-made disasters.

If farming brought little return for the owner-peasants, it brought no return for the tenants except a little pay for their labor at a price much lower than the market price. The farming result of the four tenant households in Michang is summarized in Table 3-22.

Table 3-22, Tenant farming returns in Michang, 1937

Household	Net-farming income (yuan)	Household-labor-days (day)	Worth-per-labor-day (yuan)
Household 11	-7	184	-0.04
Household 12	72	240	0.30
Household 13	42	206	0.20
Household 14	14	71	0.20
Average	30.24	175.25	0.17

Source: Huang, *The Peasant Economy*, 186, Table 11.1, Table 11.2.

Note: Net farming income is gross agricultural income deducted by the cost of fertilizer, rent, wages for hired laborers, taxes and miscellaneous expenses.

In 1937, the cost for daily labor was about 45 cents a day (about half of it was paid in cash as wage and the other half for boarding). But on average, the tenant got less than 20 cents per day for their labor on the rented land. As Philip Huang pointed out, it simply means that they worked for less than the market wage. He asked why these families continued to put in labor even when the marginal product of that labor

sank below market wages and why didn't they simply give up their farms and hire out.²⁴

The following two chapters will show that the peasants in Eastern Hebei did try to find jobs outside of farming and non-farming income was important to support their families and to sustain the peasant economy.

²⁴ Huang, *The Peasant Economy*, 189.

CHAPTER 4. SUPPORTING AGRICULTURE WITH SIDELINE PRODUCTION: THE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL INDUSTRY

The last chapter showed that the income from farming was not only low but also not enough to support the families for many peasants in Eastern Hebei. As the cultivable land was limited and the return from land was low, the rich tried to find other ways to invest their surplus money. At the same time, the poor peasants who had little or no land wanted to find any kind of work for their unused labor. The surplus of the capital (for the rich) and labor (for the poor) made the development of sideline production and rural industry possible. This chapter will explore the typical sideline production and rural industries in Eastern Hebei.

Sidelines of agricultural production: Domestic animal raising, fruit production, fishing, and grain processing

When mentioning sideline production (*fu ye*), people always first think of domestic animal raising, such as raising and selling pigs, chickens and eggs. It is true that in the 1980s many Chinese peasants made a fortune and became “ten thousand yuan families” by specializing in domestic animal or fowl raising. Even in the 1960s and 1970s, under the commune system, when there was no free market, pigs and eggs still brought a little pocket money for the peasants. But the investigation materials of the 1930s reveals that besides providing draft power and fertilizer, domestic animal

raising brought little return and had little effect on peasants' incomes. The reason was simple: as a grain shortage area, people did not have enough to eat, thus there was little left for domestic animals and fowl raising. Table 4-1 shows the farming sizes and numbers of domestic animal raised in two Eastern Hebei villages.

Table 4-1 reveals that the number of domestic animals raised in one household was related to how much land one farmed. For the landlords and rich peasants—those

Table 4-1, Farm size and domestic animal raising in Lujiazhai and Xiaojie, 1930s

Farm-size	Households	Draft-animals	Pigs	Chicken
Western part of Lujiazhai, Zunhua county, 1936				
>100 mu	2	4	21	13
50-99.9 mu	2	3.5	9	14
15-49.9 mu	17	19	51	51
<15 mu	39	14.25	25	31
0 mu	11	0	0	2
Sub-total	71	40.75	106	111
Xiaojie, Tong county, 1935				
>100 mu	2	7	12	10
50-99.9 mu	12	15	18	25
15-49.9 mu	36	17	20	64
<15 mu	81	6	8	57
0 mu	33	0	0	7
Sub-total	164	45	58	165

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on Lujiazhai*, 116-119; *Report on Xiaojie*, 94-99.

Note: Draft animals include ox, horse, mule and donkey. In Western part of Lujiazhai, two or four families raised one donkey together, so one family had half (0.5) or a leg (0.25) of a donkey. Besides the animals listed above, in Western part of Lujiazhai, there were 91 goats and two sheep belonged to three households. There were also 22 ducks.

who farmed more than 50 mu of land, each had at least one draft animal, raised two or more pigs and several chickens. For the middle peasants who farmed 15 to 50 mu of land, in Xiaojie, only about half of them had draft animals. In Western part of Lujiazai, each middle peasant family had its own donkey. They also raised some pigs and chickens. For the poor peasants who farmed less than 15 mu of land, few of them had their own draft animals. In Western part of Lujiazai, two or four poor peasant families raised one donkey together, each of them had one half or a quarter (“one leg,” according to the peasants) of a donkey. In Xiaojie, 81 poor peasant households only had 6 donkeys and raised 8 pigs, meaning more than 90 percent of the them neither raised draft animals nor pigs. Obviously, the poor peasants could not expect to supplement their family incomes by animal raising. Even for the rich peasants and landlords, pig raising brought little return for the investment. All the Chinese and Japanese investigation reports reveal this fact.

According to the Beining Railway Economic Survey Team’s report, in 1935, in Sanhe county,

The peasants who raise pigs for sale first bought small ones which weighed about 30 to 40 jin and cost 3 yuan each. They fed the pigs with beans, barley, bean-cakes (after pressing the oil) and chaff. Each day a pig was fed about one and half *sheng* (a Chinese container which contained about 2 jin of grain) worth a little higher than 0.1 yuan. After 100 days’ feeding, the pigs grew to about 80 jin and could be sold at the market at the price of 10 to 12 yuan each. The total cost (about 14 to 15 yuan) was higher than the money return, but the peasants could use the waste as fertilizer.¹

In Luan county, the Chinese investigators found that “the number of peasants who raise pigs are dependent on the [grain] harvests. If the harvest is good, [there was

¹ *Report of the Beining Railway Economic Survey Team*, 524-525.

surplus grain], more people would raise pigs the following year. If the harvest was poor, few peasant raised pigs. The beans used to fatten a piglet to 80 jin for sale cost about 7.2 yuan, but the pig only could sell for 8 yuan at the local market. Few people had interest in pig raising."²

The Japanese investigators collected similar data in Xianghe county in 1936. In Houyansi village, among the 293 families who engaged in agriculture, only 15 or 16 of them raised 5-10 pigs each. Most likely, they were rich peasants or landlords.

According to the investigation, in Houyansi,

The price for the piglet which was two months old was about one yuan. After 10 months raising, it could weigh 100 jin and sell for 12 to 13 yuan. But in this period, the cost of the feed materials was about 11.5 yuan (1,000 jin of distillers' grains cost 9 yuan and 5 dou of black beans cost 2.5 yuan), plus the one yuan for buying the piglet, the total cost was 12.5 yuan which did not even include the labor cost and other feeding materials. The peasants made it clear that raising pigs brought no return and only those who had distillers' grains and surplus beans could raise some pigs.³

In Eastern Hebei, Fengrun county produced more pigs than other counties did. In the early 1930s, it raised more than 190,000 pigs each year. For other counties, less than 100,000 pigs were raised.⁴ In this area, about half of the fat pigs was consumed by the peasants themselves, the other half was sold and transported to Beijing, Tianjin and Tangshan. Table 4-2 presents the statistics of pigs transported by Beining Railway.

Compared with pig raising, chicken raising had even less importance in peasants' economy in Eastern Hebei. Besides some eggs collected by the peddlers and

² *Ibid.*, 1234.

³ Mantetsu, *Report on Houyansi*, 114.

⁴ See *Report of the Beining Railway Economic Survey Team*, 1357, and other parts about each counties' productions.

Table 4-2, Number of pigs transported to the cities by railway, 1934

Boarding station	Number of pigs	Destination
Xugezhuang, Fengrun county	10,505	Tianjin, Tanggu
Tangshan, Luan county	11,000	Tianjin
Leizhuang, Luan county	42,000	?
Shimen, Luan county	30,000	Tianjin, Qinhuangdao
Anshan, Luan county	43,000	Tianjin, Qinhuangdao and Shanhaiguan
Houfengtai, Changli county	10,000	Tianjin, Qinhuangdao and Shanhaiguan

Source: *Report of the Beining Railway Economic Survey Team*, 1196, 1218, 1234, 1523, 1530, 1534.

Note: Some of the pigs boarded on the stations in Luan county come from surrounding counties.

sold in the cities, there was no large scale fowl buying and selling. In conclusion, the shortage of grain and the limitation of markets (few people could afford to consume meat and chicken in the 1930s) determined that domestic animal and fowl raising had little importance in agricultural production. Thus, few peasants could depend on it for increasing their income.

As discussed in Chapter 2, fruit production was limited to the mountain area along the Great Wall. In this area, the land was poor for grain production, but the climate and soil was good for fruit tree growing. Both dried and fresh fruits were exported from Zunhua, Qian-an, Changli and other northern counties. Japanese investigators paid special attention to this “special production” in their investigations. They chose Lujiazhai in Zunhua and Zhongliangshan in Changli as two sites to study the importance of fruit production in this area. But it was the Chinese investigators who made an effort to show the total amount of fruit production. Table 4-3 presents their findings.

Table 4-3, Estimated fruit production in three counties, 1934 (unit: jin)

Description of fruit	Zunhua county	Changli county	Linyu county
Apples	200,000	200,000	44,000
Pears	700,000	980,000	2,059,000
Peaches	50,000	450,000	524,000
Apricots	70,000	330,000	713,000
Hawthorns	80,000		
Chestnuts	1,000,000	400,000	
Walnuts	150,000	600,000	109,750
Grapes		1,000,000	
Crabapples		800,000	

Source: *Report of the Beiping Railway Economic Survey Team*, 1286-87, 1670-71, 661-62.

For most of the peasants, fruit was a sideline production. Most of the fruit trees grew wildly on the borders of the farm lands or on the mountain sides. There were few peasants specializing in fruit producing. In Lujiazai, only one gentleman-farmer named Yi Fuqing had a fruit orchard which produced grapes, apples, peaches, pears, apricots and other fruits. He was named a model farmer by the local government in the 1930s.

How much income did fruit production bring for the peasants? Japanese investigators provided some statistics for Zhongliangshan village in Changli county. This village had 130 households, 667 residents and about 2,000 mu of cultivable land in 1936. The kinds of fruit trees, growing area and values of production are listed in Table 4-4.

On average, one mu of fruit orchard produced 2.24 yuan, it was less than grain harvesting. But as most of the fruit trees were grown on less fertile or uncultivable

Table 4-4, Fruit production in Zhongliangshan, Changli county, 1936

Kinds of fruit	Area (mu)	Number of trees	Product (jin)	Value (yuan)	Income/mu (yuan)
Pears	265	2,650	53,000	480	1.81
Peaches	150	6,000	30,000	475	3.17
Apricots	80	800	16,000	152	1.90
Total	495	9,450	99,000	1,107	2.24

Source: Mantetsu, *Kito chiku noson jittai chosaban, kito chiku nai noson sangyo tokubetsu chosa hokokusho* (Report on the Investigation of Rural Industries in Eastern Hebei) (here after cited as Mantetsu, *Report on Rural Industries*), 92, Table 1.

lands, fruit production did bring a little extra income for the peasants. In the 1930s, some of the fruits produced in Eastern Hebei was exported to the cities or Manchuria. Table 4-5 shows the amount of dried and fresh fruits exported from Eastern Hebei by Beining Railway.

Table 4-5, Dried and fresh fruits exported from Eastern Hebei, 1934

Boarding railway station	Amount or kinds of fruit	Destination
Leizhuang, Luan county	200 tons of chestnuts and other fruits	Tianjin, Shanghai, Japan
Tangshan, Luan county	Dates, chestnuts, walnuts and others	Tianjin, Qinhuangdao
Shimen, Changli county	490 tons of walnuts and other fruits	Tianjin
Anshan, Changli county	692 tons of walnuts and other fruits	?
County seat, Changli	3,300 tons of all kinds fruits	Tianjin, Manchuria
Zhangjiazhuang, Changli	70 tons	Tianjin
Beidaihe, Funing county	100 tons of hawthorn	Manchuria

Source: *Report of the Beining Railway Economic Survey Team*, 1234, 1263-66, 1532, 1523, 1529-30, 1538, 1541.

As fresh fruit was easily spoiled and the market was limited (again, few people had the means to buy fruit for their families in the 1930s), fruit production was kept as a sideline production. It could bring a little pocket money, but its importance should not be exaggerated in peasant's budgets in Eastern Hebei.⁵

Unlike fruit production centered in the northern area, fishing was limited to the residents who lived along the Pohai coast or near the big rivers. For those who had no farming lands but boats and nets, fishing was their main occupation. Table 4-6 shows the number of fishing households and the estimated harvests.

Table 4-6, Fishing households and harvests along the Pohai Bay, 1934

County	Fishing households	Quantity or value of harvests	Marketing area
Ninghe	3,000	70,000 yuan	Tianjin
Fengrun	400	150,000 yuan	Tangshan, Tianjin
Luan	180	11,120,000 jin of fish, shrimp and crab	?
Leting	120	3,670,000 jin of fish, shrimp and crab	?
Changli	400	?	?
Funing	30	244,800 piculs of fish and shrimp	?
Linyu	150	37,200 yuan	Outside of Linyu

Source: *Report of the Beiping Railway Economic Survey Team*, 1130, 1372, 1435, 1577, 1611, 1642, 1664.

Note: In Ninghe county, the households included those who fishing on the inland rivers.

⁵ In the 1980s and 1990s, Changli, Lulong and other Eastern Hebei counties became the fruit production centers again. Many peasants made money from this industry at this time.

For those who lived on the coast and made fishing their main occupation, they divided the fishing area among themselves and prohibited other people fishing there. Some times they hired hands from those who lived near sea but had no rights to fish on the fishing area or had no equipment such as boats or nets.

Compared with those dependent on the sea, fishing in the inland rivers was a sideline production for the peasants who lived on either side of these rivers. Besides family consumption, peasants also sold their fishing harvests from the rivers in the local markets. Some merchants collected fish, shrimp and crabs in these markets and resold them in Beijing or Tianjin. According to the investigation, each year there were about 700 tons of fish, 300 tons of shrimp and 350 tons of crabs transported to Beijing, Tianjin and Tangshan by train or boat from the Jiyun River basin.⁶

The harvest of fishing depended on nature's decision, few efforts were made to increase the quantity of fish in the waters. Only in Tong county, about twenty households raised fish in human-dug ponds. The fingerlings were bought from Tianjin or Cangzhou (a small city located southwest of Tianjin). Each year about 50,000 to 60,000 jin of fish were harvested and sold in Beijing. The income was about 5,000 yuan.⁷ This artificial fish-raising should be regarded as an exception. Large scale fish-raising did not spread in Eastern Hebei until the 1980s.

To make the agricultural products more valuable, the peasants also engaged in

⁶ *Report of the Beijing Railway Economic Survey Team*, 1182-83. The total amount included some sea products in the coast area.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 555.

some primitive grain processing industries, such as oil-pressing and distilling. Besides providing oil and wine for the local markets, part of the product was transported into the cities, or exported to foreign countries. The oil pressing shops were always located in the county seats or large market towns. They were operated by rich peasants or grain merchants. Table 4-7 shows the number of oil-pressing shops, the estimated quantities and values of the products in several Eastern Hebei counties.

Table 4-7, Oil-pressing industry in some Eastern Hebei counties, 1934

County	Oil-pressing shops	Oil produced (jin)	Value (yuan)	Outside market
Miyun	25	375,000	75,000	Beijing
Shunyi	88	300,000	50,000	
Tong	4	30,000	11,000	
Zunhua	70	1,000,000		Beijing
Fengrun	17			
Qian-an	100			Shandong

Source: *Report of the Beining Railway Economic Survey Team*, 26, 479, 556, 1298, 1378-80, 1480.

Oil-pressing was a seasonal industry. The owners of the oil-pressing shops always bought the raw materials—peanuts, sesame, soybeans and cotton seed—in autumn and pressed in the two or three months of winter. The Chinese investigators gave an example to demonstrate the cost and profit for peanut oil pressing in Fengrun County. According to this investigation, the cost for producing 30 jin of peanut oil was 5.5 yuan. The cost included 5 yuan for 100 jin of raw peanuts, 0.1 yuan for peanut purchasing [100 jin] tax, 0.4 yuan for labor. The products could bring in a little higher

than 6 yuan in the local market, which included 4.6 yuan for the 30 jin oil, 1.4 yuan for the 40 jin of peanut cakes and about 0.1 yuan for the peanut shell. Totally, producing 30 jin of peanut oil could get about 0.5 yuan net income.⁸ According to the same investigation, in Fengrun county, there were more than 10 peanut-oil pressing shops. They consumed about 13,000 jin of raw peanuts and produced 3,900 jin oil per day.⁹ If they worked three month a year, they could produced 351,000 jin oil and earned about 5,850 yuan.

Like the oil-pressing industry, distilleries were operated by the rich peasants and the merchants, the poor men could only sell their labor at the oil-pressing shops or distilleries to get a little money besides boarding. Although wine was not a necessity for living, it was consumed by both the rich and the poor, especially at weddings and holidays. Maybe it was the only luxury good for the peasants in Eastern Hebei. The local gazetteer compilers complained that drinking was a bad habit, it not only wasted grain but also caused troubles.¹⁰ Like the peanut or sesame oil, part of the wine distilled in Eastern Hebei was sold at Beijing, Tianjin and Tangshan.

Besides getting the wine, the distillers got the grains left over which could be used to feed pigs. Similarly, the Chinese investigators recorded the cost and return for three distilleries in Xianghe county. The total investment was 30,000 yuan. They

⁸ Ibid., 1380.

⁹ Ibid., 1378-1379.

¹⁰ *Qian-an xianzhi* (Qian-an Gazetteer), (1903), vol. 8, customs; *Luan zhouzhi* (Luanzhou Gazetteer), (1896), vol. 8, customs.

employed about 80 workers, besides providing boarding, the average wage for a worker was 6 yuan per month. Each year the three distilleries produced about 850,000 jin of wine, which was valued at about 89,000 yuan. The 21,500 piculs of raw materials cost 64,500 yuan. The gross income was 24,500 yuan. If the distilleries worked six months a year, the total wage and boarding cost would be about 5,760 yuan (assuming boarding cost for a worker was 6 yuan per month). If we deduct 3,000 yuan (10 percent of the total investment) as depreciation charge for the investment, the net income for the three distilleries was 15,740 yuan, or 50 percent of their total investment. The return was much higher than that derived from farming.¹¹

As oil-pressing and distilling required some investment for equipment and capital for buying raw materials in the autumn, they were a rich man's sideline or main production. The only poor man's grain processing industry was bean curd making. It was a family industry and required little investment—a small stone grinding mill, a boiling pan and several dou of beans were what they needed to begin the bean curd making business. Through one night's hard work by family members, the head of the family could take the bean curd by a shoulder pole to sell or exchange bean curd for beans in the surrounding villages. Unlike the oil-pressing and distilling industries which were centered in county seats and market towns, bean curd was made in most villages. Lujiazhai village had 202 households, in which there were two households that made bean curd. Both of them were owner-tenants. One farmed 7.5 mu (owned

¹¹ *Report of the Beining Railway Economic Survey Team*, 1051.

1.5 mu) and the other farmed 18 mu (owned 13 mu).¹² There was little value added to the product by this grain processing. The difference between cost and income might lie in the bean curd makers' night working and day travel-selling.

The above analysis shows that under the limitations of raw material availability, transportation and market, domestic animal raising, fruit production, fishing and grain processing were limited to a small scale and the income was distributed among an equally small number of rich peasants. The poor peasants could not expect to increase their incomes by these sideline productions or industries.

Local resources and local industries: Reed weaving, basket and paper making

In the western part of Eastern Hebei, along the Jiyun and its tributary rivers, there were many ponds and marsh lands which were suitable for reed growing. The peasants utilized these reeds to weave mats and baskets or other utensils for exporting. Jehol and Manchuria were the main outside markets for these products. In north China and Manchuria, reed mats had important uses. Besides spreading on the earth-bed (*kang*), the reed mat could be used to contain grain and cotton, or be used to put on the bottom of a salt transporting cart or to put over the salt stacks to protect them from rain. The Jiyun river basin was one of the two reed weaving centers in north China (the other one was around the *Baiyangdian* lake in central Hebei). Table 4-8 shows the estimated reed mats woven in Eastern Hebei in the 1930s.

¹² Mantetsu, *Report on Lujiashai*, 76-77.

Table 4-8, Reed mats woven in some Eastern Hebei counties, 1934

County	Products (piece)	Outside market
Shunyi	180,000	Jehol
Tong	18,000	Sanhe, Xianghe and Wuqing
Xianghe	100,000	
Ninghe	250,000	Tianjin, Manchuria
Ji	40,000	
Yutian	200,000	Manchuria
Fengrun	450,000	Manchuria

Source: *Report of the Beining Railway Economic Survey Team*, 479, 558, 1646, 1130, 1150, 1330, 1357.

Note: The product for Fengrun was 400,000 to 500,000 pieces.

The above statistics might be a little lower than the actual production.

According to the same investigation, the mats produced around Lutai railway station in Ninghe county were exported by train or boat to Manchuria. The total weight exported each year was about 6,000 tons. As 100 pieces weighed about 1.1 tons, 6,000 ton equals about 550,000 pieces. In 1930, the local price for one piece was about 1 yuan, thus the exporting value of reed mat in Lutai area should not be less than half million yuan.¹³ Xugezhuang was another important reed mat exporting railway station. The mats woven in Xinjuntun, Hancheng, Jingjiatun and Dongfengtai (all in Fengrun County) were brought in there and then transported to Manchuria. Each year about 2,100 tons of mats was exported. Using the same calculation and price as for those in Lutai, the exporting value should be about 200,000 yuan.¹⁴

¹³ *Report of the Beining Railway Economic Survey Team*, 1185.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1195

After 1931, as Manchuguo levied heavy taxes on the products brought in from China proper, the reed mat production and export in Eastern Hebei declined dramatically.¹⁵ In Ninghe county, in the prosperous years, about 1,400 households engaged in reed mat weaving, each year they produced more than 400,000 pieces (in 1934, only 250,000 pieces, see Table 4-8).¹⁶ In Yutian county, Linnancang was the center of reed mat marketing. In the 50 villages around this market, 1,500 households engaged in mat weaving. In the mid-1920s (1924-25), the yearly product was 700,000 to 800,000 pieces. Around 1934, the product declined to less than 200,000 pieces.¹⁷

Including the mats exported to Jehol (there are no statistics for this exporting), it would not be overstating to argue that in the 1920s more than a million pieces of reed mats was exported from Eastern Hebei and about one million yuan was brought in by this industry. As the raw material (reed) had no or little cost for the weavers, the one million yuan could be regarded as a net income for the weavers.

Like the reed mats, baskets (made from reeds and all kinds of twigs) were important farming tools and utensils in north China (including Jehol and Manchuria). They were not only used to transport and contain the solid materials such as compost fertilizer, grain and fresh fruits, but were also used to transport and contain liquids such as oil and wine. As the raw materials could be obtained from reed, willow, mulberry and trees or bushes along the river beds or on the mountain sides, basket making was

¹⁵ *Manchuguo* was the name for the government established in Manchuria in 1932 under the Japanese protection, the head of the government was the last emperor of Qing Dynasty, Pu-yi.

¹⁶ *Report of the Beining Railway Economic Survey Team*, 1129-30.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1330-31.

Table 4-9, Basket making and exporting in Eastern Hebei, 1934

County	Quantity (piece)	Value (yuan)	Outside market
Miyun	35,000	10,000	Huairou
Shunyi	81,000		Surrounding counties, Beijing
Pinggu	33,000	9,600	Surrounding counties
Sanhe	31,000		Xianghe, Wuqing
Zunhua	360,000		
Qian-an	1,700,000	109,000	Jehol
Lulong	1,150,000	13,000	Jehol and Baoding
Leting	1,000,000	150,000	

Source: *Report of the Beining Railway Economic Survey Team*, 427, 479, 508, 558, 1046, 1279, 1478, 1499, 1575.

Note: The product for Zunhua county was 30,000 per month.

more popular than reed mat weaving in Eastern Hebei. Table 4-9 lists the amount of products along with estimated values where available.

Besides exporting baskets, some counties also exported raw materials for basket making. In Luan county, about 3,592 tons of twigs was transported to Tianjin and Xugezhuang.¹⁸ In Qian-an county, the barked mulberry twig was exported because the peasants there had no skill or time to make baskets as they were occupied in paper making.¹⁹ Table 4-10 shows the quantity and value of mulberry twigs exported to Manchuria from Qian-an county. It is clear that after Manchuguo levied heavy taxes on imported goods from China proper in 1933, the mulberry twig exporting quantity and

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1233.

¹⁹ Mantetsu, *Report on Rural Industries*, 26.

Table 4-10, Mulberry twigs exported from Qian-an to Manchuria, 1930s

Year	Quantity (jin)	Value (yuan)
1931	2,120,000	20,440
1932	1,380,000	15,030
1933	360,000	4,650
1934	510,000	5,500
1935	310,000	3,150

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on Rural Industries*, 27.

value declined dramatically. But in Qian-an, the most important rural industry was neither basket making nor twig exporting but paper making.

The Luan river flows across Qian-an from north to south and flooded frequently. To prevent wind blowing and flood erosion, people planted mulberry, willow and other trees on banks of the river. For a long time, the mulberry bark was used to make paper. The product was mainly sold in Manchuria. The Custom officials at Qinhuangdao had the following report in regard to paper making in Qian-an:

The most notable manufacture in this prefecture [Yongping prefecture] is that of paper, at Tsienan [Qian-an]. The people of that district are largely engaged in this industry. The paper is known under the name of sang-pi-chih, from its being made from the inner bark of the paper mulberry (*Broussonetia papyrifera*). The process of manufacture is as follow: twigs are cut off from the tree and soaked in a stream for a certain number of days, until the bark can easily be stripped off, then the inner skin or bark is removed and put to soak again, a certain quantity of lime being added to the water, and from the pulp thus made the paper is manufactured. Paper cuttings imported from the South are added to the local material after they have first been reduced to pulp. The following figures show the quantity of paper cuttings imported here for this purpose: 1909, 195 piculs; 1910, 188 piculs; 1911, 76 piculs. This paper is tough and is much used for papering windows. Its principle market is Manchuria. A few shipments have been sent to Shanghai, but it could not compete with the southern manufactures, owing to the cost of transport.²⁰

²⁰ C.I.M.C., *Decennial Reports, 1902-11*, 183.

Unlike the basket making, paper making was not a poor man's sideline business. It was a kind of shop manufacturing industry. To open a paper making shop, it required some equipment, such as a grinding mill, mold pond and baking house. According to the *Yongping Prefecture Gazetteer* which was compiled in Kangxi period (1662-1722), "Sanli River has its fountainhead at south of Xiaozhai village, it flows southward about three li east of the [Qian-an] county seat. . . . Along the river, [from the county seat] to Xujia-ai and Lugoubo, there were about forty villages, all of them had some paper making factories. The people soaked and washed the mulberry bark in the river and used it to make paper. The products were sold in the two capitals [Beijing and Shengjing, or Mukden, in Manchuria]. Many merchants came to Qian-an to do business in paper marketing and got rich. The returns from paper making was several times of that from farming on the land."²¹

Around the turn of the twentieth century, Li Xianting (1861-1943), a native of Qian-an, went to Korea twice to learn the skill of Korean paper making. When he returned home, he opened a paper making factory and produced high quality papers. The Custom officials reported that "imitation Korean paper has been made from wood-pulp, fibers of sunflower roots being added to give strength. The inventor is said to have spent all his possessions in working out a process for the manufacture of this paper. His effort has been rewarded with success, and he is credited with a fortune. This factory—Hsin Chi Paper Factory of Tsienan district—has been granted the

²¹ Wei Hongyun, ed., *Investigation and Research on Eastern Hebei Villages*, 260.

privilege of single duty treatment.”²² The new technology spread quickly among the paper makers. By the early 1930s, there were more than twenty factories producing Korean style paper, 600 shops still made old style Chinese papers and another 100 shops produced a new kind of Chinese paper.²³

In the 1930s, although a few factories introduced modern machines, such as steam engines and pumps, most of the work still had to be done by hand. The elder people remembered that around 1933, there were 18 large scale paper making factories and about 1,100 family run workshops. The factories and shops employed about 6,000 workers. In the busy season, an additional 10,000 or more women were engaged in supplementary works, such as baking paper in the hothouses or drying paper in the air.²⁴

The elder people might exaggerate the number of workshops. A journalist who visited Qian-an in 1930 reported that there were a little more than 200 paper making shops in Qian-an.²⁵ The Beining Railway Economic Survey Team also found that there were about 200 workshops in Qian-an in 1935, among them 28 were large scale factories. The value of products was 185,000 yuan, it was 30 percent of that produced in 1933. But the production of 1933 was only 40 percent that of 1931. Thus, the production value might have been about 1.5 million yuan in 1931. This calculation is confirmed by the findings of the Japanese investigation (see Table 4-11).

²² C.I.M.C., *Decennial Reports, 1912-21*, 128.

²³ Wei Hongyun, ed., *Investigation and Research on Eastern Hebei Villages*, 261.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 261.

²⁵ *Ta Kong Pao*, 12 December 1930, p.4.

Table 4-11, Quantity and value of paper exporting from Qian-an to Manchuria

Year	Chinese-paper (pack)	Value (yuan)	Korean-paper (pack)	Value (yuan)	Total value (yuan)
1931	37,000	1,110,000	5,000	300,000	1,410,000
1932	25,000	1,050,000	5,100	300,000	1,350,000
1933	20,000	500,000	4,800	288,000	788,000
1934	21,000	420,000	3,500	210,000	630,000
1935	15,000	270,000	2,500	210,000	480,000

Source: Mantetsu, *Report of Rural Industries*, 29.

Like mulberry twig exporting, paper making and exporting was in decline after Manchuguo set up the tariff wall in 1933. To improve paper quality and to increase the paper selling, Li Xianting and other paper manufacturers established a paper marketing cooperation. But this organization could not reverse the declining trend of paper making in Qian-an.

Seizing the opportunity: Straw braiding and bristle processing

The traditional rural industries, such as reed weaving, basket and paper making, have a long history, and were highly dependent on local resources and domestic markets. Another two industries, straw braiding and bristle processing, rose to importance in the late nineteenth century primarily in response to the international market.

Before China was opened to the outside world, the Chinese had already used wheat straw to braid, particularly to make straw hats. At that time, it was a family

sideline production and served a limited market. In the 1880s, as foreign demand increased and the price rose, more people were attracted into this industry. In Yutian county, formerly straw braid was made into hats and used locally, but in the 1880s, straw braid was sold to exporting merchants and few hats were made any more. Around Linnancang, in the south of the county, many village girls and peasant wives engaged in this industry.²⁶

In China, straw braid was mainly produced in the three provinces of Hebei, Shandong and Henan. In the 58 years from 1880 to 1937, the total value of straw braid exported was about 211,793,600 HK Taels [Maritime Custom tael].²⁷ On average, each year straw braid brought about 3,650,000 HK Taels, or about 5 million silver dollars into China.²⁸ There are no statistics of how many peasants braided wheat straw in Eastern Hebei, but for those who engaged in this industry the income was impressive. As wheat straw had little value except for use as fuel material in the winter, the returns from straw braid can be considered as net income for the peasants.

The Maritime Custom statistics show that both the quantity and value of straw braid exports increased from 1880 to 1910, but from 1911 on, the quantity and value were in decline.²⁹ Table 4-12 shows the quantity of straw braid exported from Tianjin from 1900 to 1909.

²⁶ Wei Hongyun, ed., *Investigation and Research on Eastern Hebei Villages*, 253.

²⁷ For each year's exporting quantity and value, see Cong Hanxiang, ed., *Rural Ji-Lu-Yu in Modern Period*, 397-99.

²⁸ 1 silver dollar equals 0.72 HK tael.

²⁹ Cong Hanxiang, ed., *Rural Ji-Lu-Yu in Modern Period*, 397-99.

Table 4-12, Straw braid exported from Tianjin, 1900-1909 (unit: picul)

Year	Colored	Mottled	White	Total
1900	2,172	19,927	8,774	30,873
1901	1,168	26,621	11,978	39,767
1902	2,140	20,744	9,137	32,021
1903	1,425	24,143	9,206	34,774
1904	767	15,636	9,895	26,298
1905	1,033	11,875	8,390	21,298
1906	859	18,418	9,438	28,715
1907	1,124	16,972	6,348	24,444
1908	920	4,218	6,240	11,378
1909	348	5,279	8,761	14,388

Source: C.I.M.C., *Returns of Trade and Trade Reports (1909)*, 140.

After 1911, although straw braid exports were in decline, domestic straw braid demand and hat-making grew. In Yutian county, many people re-engaged in straw braid hat making. In the late 1920s, about 1,350,000 pieces of straw braid hats were made in that county.³⁰ In Baodi county, “around Xin-an market town, wheat was planted and many residents there braided the straw. They sold the products to local hat-making families or to the local merchants who transported them to Tianjin for exporting.”³¹

Compared with straw braid making, pig bristle processing was more important for Eastern Hebei, especially for the peasants of Fengrun county. According to the investigation, this industry originated in a village near Tangshan. In the first half of the

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 400.

³¹ *Report of the Beining Railway Economic Survey Team*, 1072.

1880s, Zhao Xin, a native of Fengrun but employed by a British trading company in Tianjin, returned to his village to collect and process horse and then pig bristles. In a few years, Zhao made a fortune in this industry, and more and more people imitated him and this industry spread quickly in the surrounding villages. By late 1880s, taking advantage of water and transportation, the processing industry moved to Hetou (which means “head of the river”) and Xugezhuang, the latter was the starting point of the canal dug for transporting Kaiping coal. From there the processed bristle could be transported by boat (later by train) to Tianjin for exporting. Xugezhuang (including Hetou, the two merged into one in later years) became the bristle processing center in north China. The Custom officials at Tianjin reported that “it is worthy of note that a great many of the goods for which outward transit passes are taken out, and more especially skins, wool, and bristles, do not arrive at this port in their original condition, but have undergone a greater or less degree of tanning or cleaning. . . .The same [processing] happens in the case of bristles, which are brought down—principally from Manchuria—in their crude state to Fengjunshsien [Fengrun county], near Tangshan, to be cleaned, sorted, repacked and sent to Tientsin.”³²

As the bristle processing industry developed, the raw material (crude bristle) collected from the local area was not enough for the processors, outside crude bristle had to be brought in. In the twentieth century, there were four important sources for this industry. The first one was the area along the Great Wall. The raw bristles from

³² C.I.M.C., *Decennial Reports, 1902-11, 202-203.*

this area was called “north pass bristles.” They were sent down the Luan River and then transported by train to Xugezhuang. The quality from this area was medium.³³ The second supply was the area located west of the Beijing-Tianjin railway, the bristles were called “west pass goods.” In the 1930s, about one and half million jin of raw bristles were brought to Xugezhuang through Beijing-Suiyuan and Beijing-Hankou railways each year, the quality, however, was low.³⁴ The third and most important source area was Manchuria, the raw bristles coming from there were called “eastern bristle” because Manchuria is located northeast of Xugezhuang, the quality was high. In 1934, a total of about 600 tons of raw bristles was transported to Xugezhuang by railway from this direction.³⁵ The last source was the nearby counties of Luan, Yutian and Leting. The quality was medium.³⁶ Before the development of the bristle processing industry, there was little use of the pig hair except for use as fertilizer. So, the price for raw bristle in the villages was very low. But in Xugezhuang, the price for medium quality raw bristles was 0.9 to 1.5 yuan per jin.³⁷ The high price might be the result of long distance involved in transportation and the labor costs of the peddlers and merchants traveling to villages.

In Xugezhuang, the raw bristle was first cleaned by employed women—most of them were peasant wives from the surrounding villages, the task was to separate fine

³³ *Report of the Beining Railway Economic Survey Team*, 1990, 1991, 1949.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 1172.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1561.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1231, 1954, 1238, 1984.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 1374.

hairs and real bristles. Then, the male workers sorted the bristle into 17 categories according to its length. The last process was binding and packing. In 1935, although the bristle processing industry was already in decline, there were still more than 50 workshops in Xugezhuang and Hetou, each employing several dozen or even one hundred workers. Including those engaged in temporary or supplementary work, more than 5,000 people depended upon bristle processing to make a living.³⁸ In the early 1930s, about 320 tons of processed bristle was transported from Xugezhuang to Tianjin for exporting. The local price was about 1.5 million yuan. In Tianjin, the price was about 2.2 million. Table 4-13 shows the quantity and value of bristles exported from Tianjin for the decade from 1900 to 1909.

Table 4-13, Quantity and value of bristle exported from Tianjin, 1900-1909

Year	Quantity (picul)	Value (HK tael)	Value (silver dollar)
1900	8,032	706,816	981,689
1901	11,020	969,760	1,346,889
1902	14,815	1,303,720	1,810,722
1903	15,323	1,348,424	1,872,811
1904	14,954	1,315,952	1,827,711
1905	11,326	996,688	1,384,289
1906	15,859	1,395,592	1,938,322
1907	18,719	1,647,272	2,287,878
1908	18,173	1,599,224	2,221,14
1909	18,386	1,617,968	4,247,178

Source: C.I.M.C., *Returns of Trade and Trade Reports (1909)*, 140.

Note: I use the price of 1909 (88 HK taels per picul) for the whole decade to calculate the values.

³⁸ Ibid., 1374.

At this time, it is difficult to find how the income from bristle processing was distributed among the merchants who collected raw materials, the workshop owners who organized the processing production and the workers who cleaned, sorted and packed the bristles. But, it is obvious that this industry brought huge amounts of silver dollars to Eastern Hebei.

From sideline to main production: Handicraft weaving in Baodi area

As a grain shortage area, Eastern Hebei had a long history of exporting cloth for importing grains. The local gazetteer showed that spinning and weaving were important parts of the peasant economy. Before foreign cotton goods were imported into north China on a large scale, in both Leting and Luan counties, hand spinning and weaving were very popular among the peasant families. A local official in Luan praised the weaving custom in a poem: “The rural women weave cloth to help their husbands who work on the fields. Before the western wind blows, the warp and weft had already been prepared. It is past mid-night, the moon is high over the trees, in the deep lane of the village, the wooden loom still sounds here and there.”³⁹

Besides providing cloth for local use, Leting and Luan also exported surplus cloth to other places. The *Leting Gazetteer* compiled in the Qianglong period (1736-1795) reported that of the cloth produced in Leting, only “10 or 20 percent was used inside the county, 80 or 90 percent was transported to other places. . . . Trading cloth

³⁹ *Yongping fuzhi* (Yongping prefecture gazetteer) (1876), vol.25, customs.

for millet was actually one way the poor people manage to keep themselves fed.” The same pattern of trade was noted by the *Luan Gazetteer* for the Jiaqing period (1796-1820).⁴⁰ The Dalian cloth woven by Leting people was very famous. In the Jiaqing period, it had already been transported to Heilongjiang area where it was in much demand.⁴¹ When discussing the main products in Yongping prefecture, the Custom officials at Qinghuangdao said that

Loting [Leting] is well known in this part of Chihli for its cotton cloth, which was formerly woven from native-grown cotton. The imported yarn was, however, found so much cheaper and better, that the spinning of the native cotton was, in consequence, given up. The fabric, known as tao-pu, had won a name for itself in Manchuria, but it appears to have been, in recent years, replaced there by nankeens imported from the South.⁴²

Besides cloth, Eastern Hebei also exported cotton threads to the area beyond the Great Wall. In Guangxu period (1875-1908), the cotton thread spun in Linyu county was sold in Manchuria. Those spun in Baodi and Xianghe were transported to Zhangjiakow, even to Mongolia.⁴³ But around the turn of the twentieth century, as more and more machine made cotton yarn and cloth were imported into north China, handicraft spinning and weaving declined in some counties. In Yutian and Fengrun, many spinners and weavers lost out to the competition and gave up spinning and weaving.⁴⁴ In Changli county, the number of people who engaged in spinning and weaving decreased dramatically.⁴⁵ But for other peasants, the low priced machine

⁴⁰ Huang, *The Peasant Economy*, 119.

⁴¹ Cong Hanxiang, ed., *Rural Ji-Lu-Yu in Modern Period*, 341.

⁴² C.I.M.C., *Decennial Reports, 1902-11*, 183.

⁴³ Cong Hanxiang, ed., *Rural Ji-Lu-Yu in Modern Period*, 350.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 351.

⁴⁵ *Changli xianzhi* (Changli Gazetteer) (1933), vol.4.

made cotton yarn provided an opportunity to develop a weaving industry. In the early twentieth century, in Xianghe county, there were several thousand households engaged in commercialized weaving. Each year, they produced more than one million pieces of cloth.⁴⁶ Most of the products were sold beyond the Great Wall, a small part of them was transported to Beijing and Tianjin. According to the same source, there were more people engaged in weaving in Baodi county than those in Xianghe. The local people said that “Baodi is a large harbor of cloth and Xianghe is a small one.” Most of Baodi’s products also sold beyond the Great Wall.⁴⁷ By the 1920s, Baodi became one of the three handicraft weaving centers in north China, the other two were Gaoyang in Hebei and Weixian in Shandong.

Several local factors stimulated the handicraft weaving industry in Baodi area. The first one was the insufficiency of agriculture as a source of livelihood. Compared with other counties in Eastern Hebei, Baodi had a lower population density and on average each household had about 28 mu of land (see Table 2-4). But, the land was poor and was always waterlogged in the summer. In this county, out of 2,750,000 mu of cultivable land, no less than 1,357,000 mu, or 50 percent, were flooded in 1917. 1,262,000 mu, or 46 percent, in 1931, and 743,000 mu, or 27 percent in 1932, were

⁴⁶ Generally speaking, the length of one piece of hand woven cloth was about 10 meters and the width was about 0.33 meter.

⁴⁷ Tianjin dang-an guan, ed., *Archive Materials of Tianjin Chamber of Commerce*, 1: 971.

flooded again⁴⁸. Figure 4-1 shows the enormous part of the county which was often visited by flood.

The second factor was the improvement of the weaving handlooms. In the early twentieth century, an improved type of loom, (the Chinese called it the “iron gear loom”) was introduced into north China from Japan. It was imitated and manufactured in Tianjin. The new type loom could increase a weaver’s productivity fourfold compared with using the old wooden loom.

The third factor was the nearness to Tianjin and the sponsorship of the officials. In 1906, the Zhili governor, Yuan Shikai, introduced a textile department in his Institute for Technical Training in Tianjin. Students who came from Baodi and attended this department soon spread the new Japanese style loom and weaving technology in their home districts.⁴⁹ Another source said that the spread of weaving was encouraged by another high official, Xong Xiling, as a means of flood relief.⁵⁰ The Jiyun River which connected Baodi with Tianjin made the importation of cotton yarn very easy and cheap.

The last factor was the opening of the middle road to Jehol. Traditionally, there were two important roads which penetrated into Jehol. The west road started from Beijing, went through Gubeikou and arrived in Chengde, the capital of Jehol. The east road paralleled the Luan River and passed through the Great Wall at Xifengkou. When

⁴⁸ H. D. Fong [Fang Xianting], “*The growth and decline of rural industry enterprise in North China: a case study of the cotton handloom weaving industry in Paoti [Baodi]*,” *Bulletin of Nankai Institute of Economics*, Industrial series, no. 8, (1934) (here after cited as *A Case Study of Baodi*), 5-6.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁵⁰ Mantetsu, *Report on Rural Industries*7. Xong at that time was the commissioner of flood relief. He once held the position of the Premier of the Republic Government in Beijing.

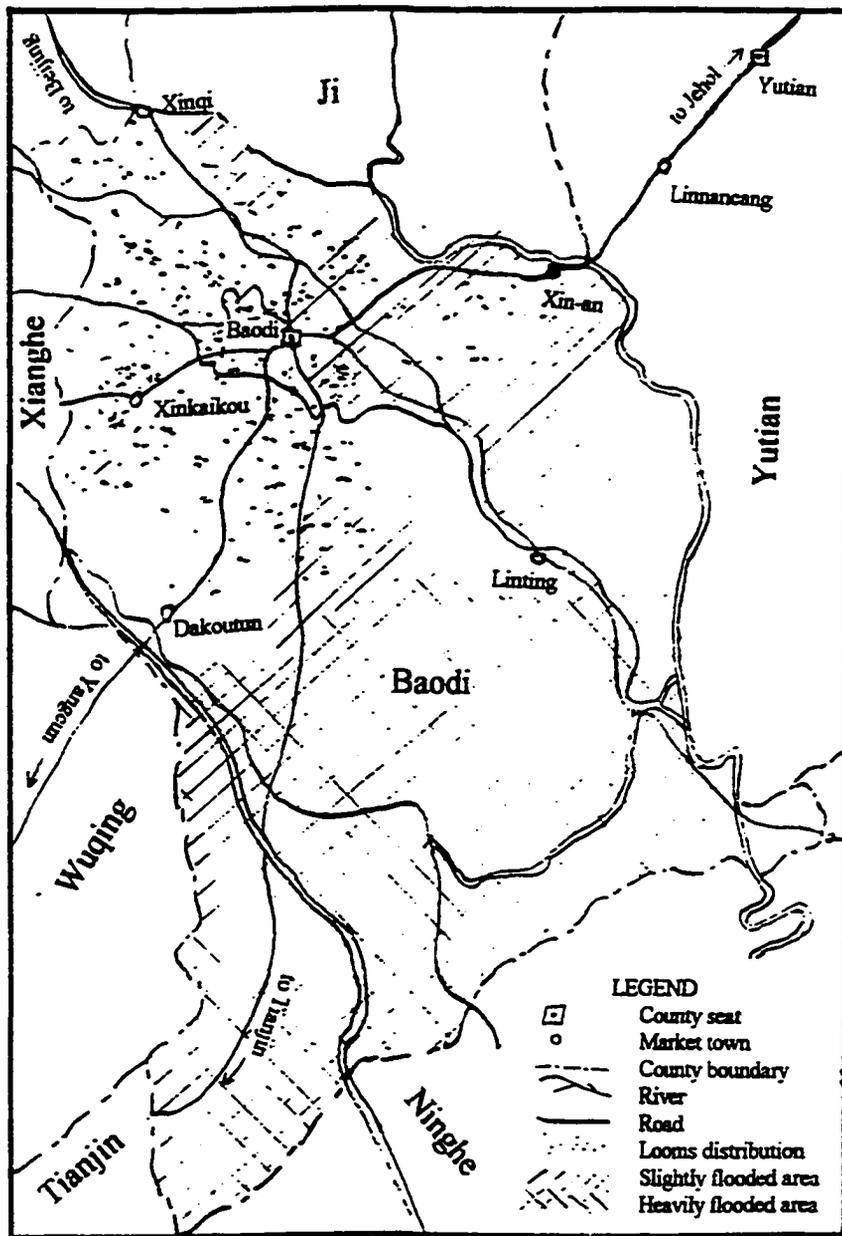


Figure 4-1, Map showing often flooded areas and distribution of cotton handlooms in Baodi county (Adapted from the map in Fong, *A Case Study of Baodi*, p.6.)

Tianjin was opened as a treaty port after 1860, it soon became the commercial and industrial center of north China. To cut the time traveling from Jehol to Tianjin, a central road was opened. The road started from Tianjin, stopped at Linnancang in Yutian and reached Xifengkou. Commodities were transported by mule, donkey and camel (see Figure 4-2). As Baodi was located between Tianjin and Yutian, it was easy to get raw materials and export the completed products.

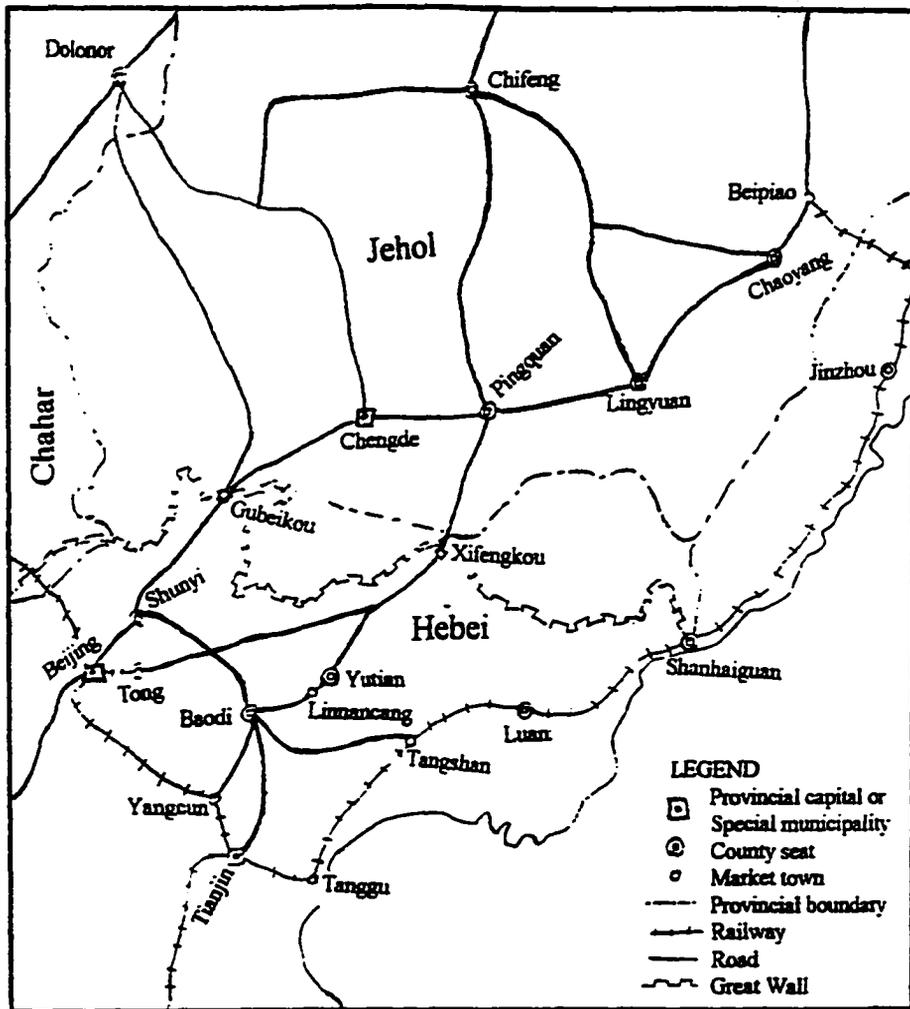


Figure 4-2, Map showing trade routes for Baodi fabrics
(Adapted from the map in Fong, *A Case Study of Baodi*, p.35.)

During the First World War, as Western Powers were engaged in fighting and reduced their exports of cotton goods, the handicraft weaving took advantage of the opportunity and occupied the large market beyond the Great Wall. By 1923, Baodi handicraft weaving reached its highest level of development. According to H. D. Fong and his colleagues' investigation, in that year, 10,649 peasant households engaged in handloom weaving industry. Among them, 2,999 were independent craftsmen operating 3,207 looms, and 7,650 were outweavers for merchant employers operating 8,180 looms.⁵¹ The marketing area, quantity and value of the cloth exported from Baodi county is shown in Table 4-14.

It is difficult to determine how much money the handicraft weaving industry brought into Baodi county because there is no information about the returns for the cloth merchants' investments. But it is obvious that weaving income was important for the tenants and small scale owner-peasants. According to the same study, the average labor income for the independent weaver was a little higher than that for the out-

Table 4-14, Distribution of Baodi cotton cloth by provinces, 1923

Province	Piece	Percent	Value (yuan)	Percent
Jehol	3,303,000	72%	7,392,000	61%
Manchuria	680,000	15	1,734,000	14
Northwest	246,000	5	792,000	7
Hebei	360,000	8	2,226,000	18
Total	4,589,000	100	12,144,000	100

Source: Fong, *A Case Study of Baodi*, 11.

⁵¹ Fong, *A Case Study of Baodi*, 46.

Table 4-15, Amount of cloth woven and wages earned in Baodi county, 1923

Kind of cloth	No. of pieces	Wage per piece (yuan)	Total wage (yuan)
Woven by the out-weavers			
Yung-chi	1,150,150	0.356	409,453
Ta-chih	460,450	0.368	169,446
K'uan-mian	221,500	0.907	178,751
Pung-chi	1,390,820	0.356	495,132
Sub-total	3,222,920	0.388	1,252,781
Woven by the independent weavers			
Yung-chi	928,850	0.399	370,611
Ta-chih	364,550	0.413	150,559
K'uan-mian	174,500	0.906	158,097
Pung-chi	91,780	0.399	36,620
Sub-total	1,559,680	0.458	715,887
Total	4,782,600	0.423	1,928,668

Source: Fong, *A Case Study of Baodi*, 46-47, Tables 11a and 11b.

weavers employed by the merchant employers (see Table 4-15).

The net income for the weavers might be a little lower than 1,968,668 yuan if the cost for sizing the yarn and depreciation charge on the looms used by the weavers are deducted from the total wages.⁵² But if the interest earned by the merchants who employed out-weavers and those who just bought and sold clothes is added, the total income brought by weaving and marketing to Baodi county appears to be around 2 million yuan in 1923.

⁵² Fong deducted 543,303 yuan and 68,222 yuan respectively for the sizing and loom depreciation. He did not explain how he calculated the costs. *Ibid.*, 47.

Table 4-16, Cotton yarn consumed and cloth woven in Baodi, 1923-1933

Year	Number of looms	Cotton yarn consumed (yuan)	Cloth woven (piece)
1923	11,367	11,239,000	4,783,000
1928	10,158	7,417,000	3,200,000
1929	9,841	7,629,000	3,100,000
1930	8,412	5,963,000	2,650,000
1931	7,646	5,100,000	2,141,000
1932	6,402	3,756,000	1,810,000
1933	4,825	2,464,000	1,351,000

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on Rural Industries*, 8, Table 4.

From 1924 on, the handicraft weaving in Baodi declined, but until the mid-1930s, it was still an important part of Baodi's economy. Table 4-16 shows the number of looms, the value of cotton yarn consumed and the amount of cloth produced.

The weaving industry was not limited in Baodi county only. In the adjacent Sanhe, Xianghe and Yutian counties, commercialized weaving also developed. In both Sanhe and Yutian, the merchant employers distributed cotton yarn among the outweavers and collected the completed products, then paid wages for the weavers.⁵³ As in Baodi county, the products were mainly exported to Jehol and Manchuria. In Yutian, Woluoku and Linnancang were two centers for handicraft weaving and cloth marketing. The cloth assembled in Woluoku was mainly sold beyond the north and west passes of the Great Wall (in Jehol, Chahar and Suiyuan). Those assembled in Linnancang were marketed in Manchuria. In the most prosperous period, each year more than 60,000

⁵³ *Report of the Beining Railway Economic Survey Team*, 526-27, 1328.

packs (each pack had 30 to 40 pieces) were exported. In the mid-1930s, the cloth was mainly sold to western provinces, such as Suiyuan and Shanxi, each year only 20,000 to 30,000 packs were exported.⁵⁴

It is a pity that the investigation result of Xifanzhuang in Baodi county—the village chosen as a representative for handcraft weaving in 1937—was considered unsatisfactory and was not published along with other three investigation reports. The source materials may have been lost in the war because they were never mentioned by the investigators or researchers in the later years. Here, the investigation findings of Longwo and other six villages in Yutian county will be cited to show the relationship of land-holding and cloth weaving (see Table 4-17).

Table 4-17, Land-holding and cloth-weaving in Longwo and other six villages in Yutian county

Village	Household in 1936	Land per household in 1936 (mu)	Landloom owned	Household weaving in 1936
Longwo	29	18.06	8	7
Xiaowangzhuang	58	12.09	21	15
Dongxiaochenzhuang	12	6.50	6	5
Xixiaochenzhuang	9	7.38	3	3
Xiaojiangzhuang	17	4.91	3	3
Mengxinzhuang	91	1.18	55	34
Zhimafeng	90	7.51	50	26
Total/average	306	7.31	164	93

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on the 25 villages in Eastern Hebei*, 2: 41-42.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 1328-29.

As Table 4-17 shows, in 1936, there were a total 306 households in Longwo and other six villages. These households owned 164 handlooms (some of them were not in operation in 1936), that means more than half of the households had engaged in cloth weaving in the previous years. In Mengxinzhuang, among the 91 households, there were 55 handlooms, which means about 60 percent of the households were engaged in the weaving industry. The reason for such a high percentage is that: on average, each household only had 1.18 mu of land. Obviously, they could not be expected to make a living on farming alone. As in Baodi county, handicraft weaving industry was in decline in the 1930s, but even as late as 1936, about 30 percent of the households (93 out of 306) were still engaged in weaving. Among them four households made weaving as their sole occupation. The investigator talked about the weaving industry in these villages as follows:

The weavers were men and women from the ages of 16 to 40. In the [weaving industry] prosperous years, the weavers worked from 5 am to 9 pm on the looms and did not stop weaving even in the agricultural busy seasons. They hired farming laborers to work on the farms. At that time, weaving became their main occupations. Now [in 1936], the weaving industry was in decline and the return from farming is higher than that from weaving. Few of those who had enough land to farm or those who had a permanent job engaged in weaving any longer. Those who had no land, no skill to find other jobs had to continue to weave on the handlooms.⁵⁵

To appreciate the relative importance of the income of weaving industry, it must be compared with the income derived from farming. Table 4-18 shows the average farming income for the five farming related classes.

The following discussion assumes there were no changes in the number of

⁵⁵ Mantetsu, *Report on the 25 villages in Eastern Hebei*, 41-42.

Table 4-18, Land utilization and farming income in Baodi, 1933

Farming class	Households	Land-owned (mu)	Land-farmed (mu)	Average farm size (mu)	Average farming income (yuan)
Landlord	770	385,000			832.50
Rich peasant	4,364	687,500	687,500	134.67	217.65
Owner peasant	23,102	1,377,500	1,377,500	59.62	144.76
Owner tenant	12,835	300,000	500,000	38.95	86.62
Tenant	10,268		185,000	18.01	26.38

Source: Fong, *A Case Study of Baodi*, 7, Table 2a.

households, land holding and farming income between 1923 and 1933. In 1923, there were 10,649 households, or 20 percent of the total, engaged in commercialized weaving industry. On average, the weaving income for each family was about 105 yuan.⁵⁶ It was much higher than the farming income for the owner-tenants and tenants. For many families in Baodi county in the 1920s, weaving became a main occupation and farming became a sideline production. In fact, as commercialized weaving developed, adult males, not women, became the main participants as weavers.

In the 1930s, although weaving was in decline, the percentage of weaving households was still very high in some villages in Baodi county. Xiaojiazhuang, a village located 8 li north of the county seat, had 250 households in 1936, among them 170, or 68 percent, engaged in weaving. In these 170 weaving households, 50 had no land at all. On average, each weaving household had two looms, but some had as many

⁵⁶ The average income is calculated as followings: Total wage income (1,968,668 yuan) minus cost for sizing (543,303 yuan), the depreciation of the looms (68,322 yuan) and the pay for hired laborers. The net wage income was 1,119,287 yuan, which is divided by the total number of weaving households number. See Fong, *A Case Study of Baodi*, 47-38.

as four. Most of the weavers worked in the agricultural slack season and stopped for farming in the busy season. A weaver who worked 11 hours a day could weave 2 pieces. Around 1923, each piece could bring 30 to 50 cents. Meaning a day's weaving could bring 0.6 to 1 yuan. It was much higher than that paid to the farming day-laborer. But in 1936, a piece of cloth could only bring 0.1 yuan.⁵⁷ In another village named Zhaoxiazhuang (located 5 li west of the county seat), among the 220 households, 210 households, or 95 percent, engaged in weaving. Each household had one or four looms, most of them had two or three. The most capable weaver could weave three pieces a day, but on average, a weaver could weave one piece a day. In 1936, the whole village produced 150,000 pieces of cloth. Even though one piece only brought 0.1 yuan net income, the total income from weaving for the 210 households was 15,000 yuan, or 71 yuan for each. It was still much higher than farming income for the tenants.⁵⁸

The importance of the weaving industry in Sanhe county's economy was confirmed by the local gazetteer which was compiled in the 1930s:

Around Huangzhuang market town in southern part of the county, half of the women engaged in weaving, the sound of looms could be heard every where. On the market day, many people took the cloth to trade for the cotton yarn. The southern part of the county was always flooded—in ten years, the flood might visit this area nine times, the reason that the people there could still be fed and clothed was the income from weaving. The merchants bought the cloth and sold it outside of Gubeikou [in Jehol], they made a fortune and the people became richer. According to a village head, there was about 2,000 mu of cultivable land in his village. On average, each mu of land could produce 5 yuan net income a year, the 2,000 mu could bring 10,000 yuan. But in this village, there were 200 handicraft looms. The weavers said that if all family members who could not work on the field, such as women, elders and children, worked with one loom, after the expending for boarding, in one month they could earn 10 yuan net income. Even though

⁵⁷ Mantetsu, *Report on Rural Industries*, 9.

⁵⁸ Mantetsu, *Report on the investigation of general conditions of the sixteen counties in Eastern Hebei*, 141.

they only work ten months a year, the income for one loom was 100 yuan. For 200 looms, the income was 20,000 yuan, it was double the income from the 2,000 mu of land. The land located south of Huangzhuang was always waterlogged by flood, by promoting weaving, the people could improve their livelihood. Without farming they could still have some income, it is mother nature that forces people to make a living by other means.⁵⁹

In 1931, the Hebei provincial government made a census about the agricultural and industrial production in its counties. According to these statistics, in Baodi county, the industrial income was 45.8 percent of the peasants' total income. In Yutian county, it was 36.7 percent. For the whole Eastern Hebei area, the value of industrial products was about 13 percent of the total production.⁶⁰ Thirteen percent is much lower than what industrial production holds in today's rural economy in China, but for the peasants of the 1930s, this industrial income made the difference between living or dying.

⁵⁹ *Sanhe xianzhi* (Sanhe Gazetteer) (1935), vol. 15.

⁶⁰ Cong Hanxiang, ed., *Rural Ji-Lu-Yu in Modern Period*, 440-45, Table 4.9.

CHAPTER 5. LOOKING BEYOND THE VILLAGE:
WORKING IN THE CITIES OR GOING TO MANCHURIA

As Ramon Myers pointed out, Chinese peasants never kept tidy accounts of their income and expenditure, but “this is not to say they were not interested in increasing their income for they used their land for crops which commanded the highest price and carefully allocated labor between farming and working outside the village to earn whichever income was greatest.”¹ In Eastern Hebei, as the transportation was improved and the new industrial centers rose after 1870, more and more peasants took the opportunity to produce more cash crops for the markets or leave the villages to find jobs in commerce and industry. The proximity of both the biggest cities in north China (Beijing and Tianjin) and the last frontier of China (Manchuria) made the non-farming opportunity increasingly attractive to the Eastern Hebei peasants.

The improvement of transportation and the rise of the new industrial cities

Before the 1870s, there were no modern transportation facilities in China. The so-called imperial road (from Beijing to Chengde, capital of Jehol, and to Mukden, the old capital of Manchuria) was only a primitive dirt road without paving. The road was not even open the full year because the summer floods always washed away the wooden bridges across several of the rivers, such as Bei, Jiyun and Luan. The fare for

¹ Myers, *The Chinese Peasant Economy*, 53.

transportation was high and the journey for the travelers was difficult. This situation began to change in the 1880s.

In 1877, under Chili governor Li Hongzhang's order, Tang Tingshu hired British engineers to open a coal mine near Kaiping village in Luan county. Officially, the mine was named the Chinese Engineering and Mining Company. As it was located south of Tangshan, or Tang Mountain, it was also called Tangshan Coal Mine by the local people. To make the transportation of coal from Kaiping to the seaport of Tanggu cheaper—in the late nineteenth century, the coal was mainly used as a power source for steam ships—the “government supervised and merchant managed” Chinese Engineering and Mining Company began to dig a canal from Hetou (in Fengrun county) to Lutai (in Ninghe county). But from Hetou to the main shaft at Kaiping there was still several miles distance. To mitigate the conservatives' opposition to railway construction, the company appealed to the Emperor and obtained permission to connect Kaiping with Xugezhuang (near Hetou) by a tramway. “The track to be of standard railway gauge, and the cars to be drawn by mules, and this line was begun in 1880 and completed in 1881.”² In fact, this was the first railroad constructed in China with the Chinese government's permission.³ Soon, the mules were replaced by a real steam locomotive under Li Hongzhang's support. By 1882, two locomotives were bought to work the seven-mile length of railway to the canal, which had been completed at the

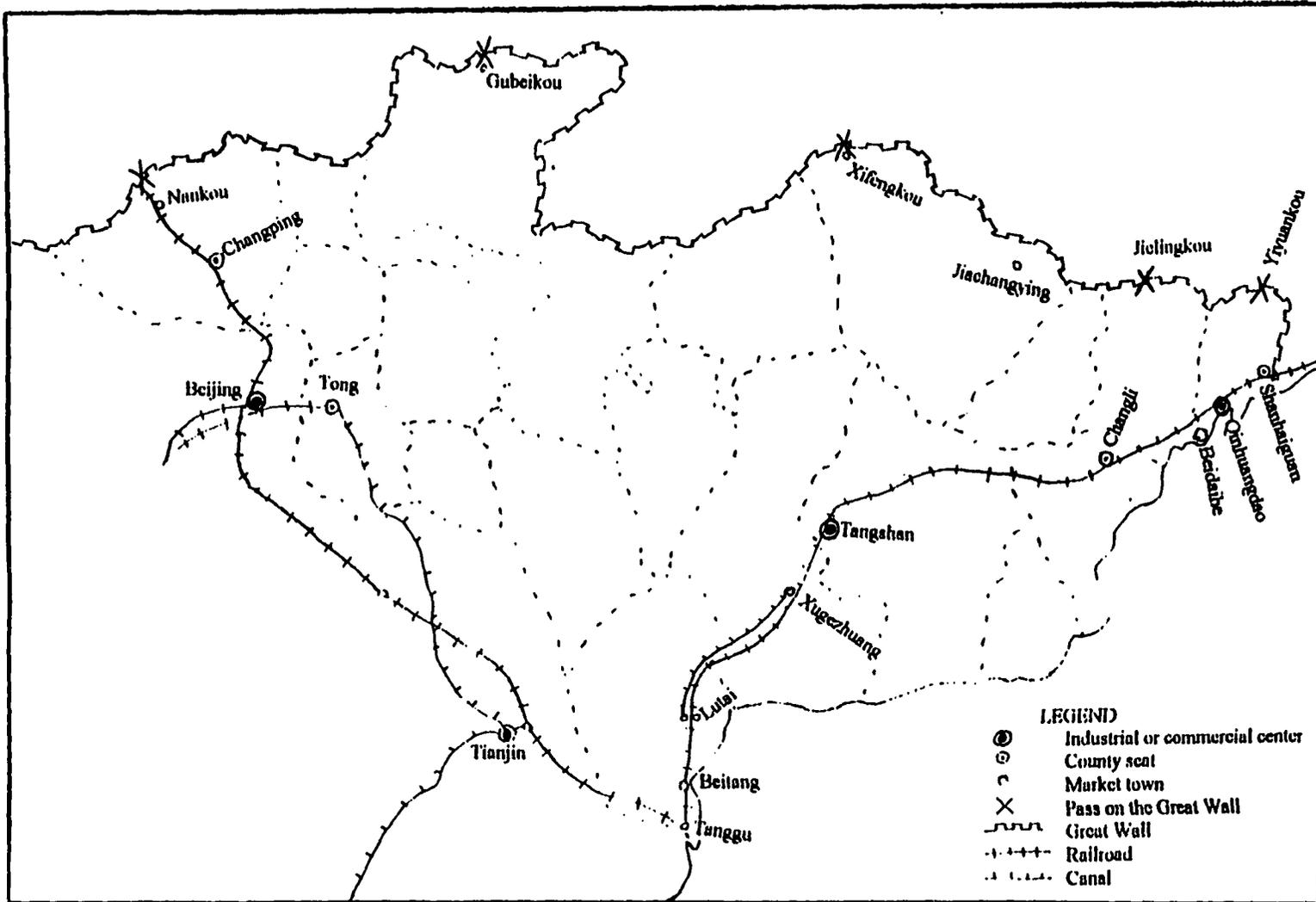
² Hosea B. Morse, *The Trade and Administration of China* (third revised edition), (New York: Russell & Russell, 1967), 434.

³ Before the Kaiping-Xugezhuang railroad, foreigners built a short railroad in Shanghai in 1876. It was bought and dismantled by Chinese government the next year.

same period.⁴ In 1886, the Kaiping steam tramway was extended to Lutai. Although the advantage of railway transportation was obvious, the expansion was based on the strategic argument of facilitating the movement of troops and the transport of war material. These issues made the extension of the railway possible. By August of 1888, the railway line was completed to Tianjin. But once again, some high officials opposed extending the railway westward to Beijing. This time, they also based their arguments on strategic grounds. They argued that the railway might be used by foreigners to attack Beijing. The extension to Beijing was temporarily delayed. But Li Hongzhang proceeded the extension eastward to Shanhaihuan. The line to this point was completed in 1894. Overriding an objection made by Russia to the surveying in Manchuria, Li Hongzhang pushed the line further eastward, reaching Zhonghusuo, forty miles from Shanhaiguan, on the outbreak of the war with Japan in 1895. The result of the war demonstrated the strategic value of railways, and the western extension was taken in hand. Beijing was reached at the end of 1896.⁵ By the early twentieth century, the railroad was extended to Mukden. The Jingfeng Railway (Beijing-Mukden, later called Beining Railway as Fengtian was renamed Liaoning Province) was the only railway connecting China proper and Manchuria and was under Chinese government control and Chinese management. This railroad not only lowered the transportation costs but also stimulated emigration to Manchuria (see Figure 5-1).

⁴ Morse, *The Trade and Administration of China*, 434.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 436.



Figure, 5-1, Railroad, canal and cities in Eastern Hebei

One of the main motivations for the railway construction was to transport coal from Kaiping to the sea ports, a short branch line was built from Tanghe (in Linyu county) to Qinhuangdao, a comparatively ice-free port on a frozen coast, which afforded an outlet when Tianjin (December to February) and Niuzhuang (a sea port in Fengtian province, frozen from November to March) were iced-over. In 1910, the Jingfeng Railway moved a little south from Tanghe and made Qinhuangdao a main station on the road. The improvement of transportation made the increase of coal production and profit possible. In 1908, a new coal mine was opened in Luanzhou (later named Luan county) by Chili bureaucrats, it was called The Luanzhou Mining Company. Three years later, it was amalgamated with the Chinese Engineering and Mining Company and renamed Kailan Mining Administration. By the 1930s, the Kailan Mining Administration had five shafts and employed about 20,000 workers. It produced about 530 million tons a year.⁶ To speed the coal transportation and avoid the delay by civil or military interference with the railway administration, a second line (doubled the old one) was built from Tangshan (formerly named Kaiping town) to Qinhuangdao. More than half of the Tangshan coal was exported from Qinhuangdao, it was opened to foreign trade and a custom office was established there in 1902.⁷

As coal provided a cheap power source and the railroad made transportation cheaper, new industries were developed in Tianjin, Tangshan and Qinhuangdao.

⁶ About the opening of the Lanzhou Mining Company, its amalgamation with the Chinese Engineering and Mining Company, the five shafts and the worker numbers for each shaft, see *Luan xianzhi* (Luan Gazetteer) (1937), vol.14, Industries.

⁷ Morse, *The Trade and Administration of China*, 238.

Tianjin was not only the trading but also the machine manufacturing and textile industry center in north China. Around the turn of the twentieth century, the Chee Hsin Cement Company was capitalized in Tangshan. Soon, it became the largest cement producer in China. By the 1930s, it employed more than 4,000 workers and produced about 1.6 million bags (each bag contained about 180 kilograms) a year.⁸ Like the Kailuan coal mines, the Chee Hsin Cement Co. made a huge profit in a short period and in 1918, it provided part of the capital for the opening of Huaxin Textile Co. in Tangshan. In 1921, it extended its business to chinaware production and established the Chee Hsin Chinaware Factory. As a coal producing and exporting station, Tangshan also became the center for railway car building and repairing center. By the early 1930s, it was estimated that there were about 100,000 people living in Tangshan.⁹ Obviously, Tangshan was a new industrial center, but it did not obtain the status as a city until the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war in 1937.

The railway made traveling comfortable and more and more foreigners and Chinese bureaucrats and businessmen came to Beidaihe, a famous summer resort beach in China, which was a few miles south of Qinhuangdao. In the 1920s, the Yaohua Glass Factory was established in Qinhuangdao. By 1931, according to the Customs statistics, there were 20,020 residents in Qinhuangdao. That means in about three decades, Qinhuangdao developed from a small fishing village to a small size trading and manufacturing city.

⁸ *Luan Gazetteer* (1937), vol.14, industries.

⁹ Cressey, *China's Geographic Foundation*, 174.

There are no statistics for the origin of the industrial workers in Tianjin, Tangshan and Qinhuangdao, thus it is impossible to calculate how many Eastern Hebei peasants were employed by the new industries. One source claims that most of the coal mine workers came from central Hebei (around Baoding, capital for Hebei province) and Shandong Province, but most of the employees in the railway related work shops, Huaxin textile and Chee Hsin cement factories were local people.¹⁰ The Japanese investigation material showed several adult males from Lujiazhai village, Zunhua County, worked in Tangshan.¹¹

Besides providing employment opportunities, the construction of the railroad and the rise of new industry provided new markets for local products. In the mountain county such as Funing, the land was poor for crop production, but the mountain produced lumber and other inferior trees which could be sent to Tangshan for use as shaft pillars in the coal mines.¹² In Fengrun county, the vegetables produced in Michang and other villages were transported to Tangshan and sold to the workers and their families. In fact, as Tangshan rose as an industrial center, more and more foodstuffs and other living necessities were imported from surrounding counties. A local proverb said that “it is impossible to carry away all goods in Jianchangying (a market town in Qian-an county located south of the Great Wall), it is difficult to feed

¹⁰ Mantetsu, *Report on the investigation of general conditions of the sixteen counties in Eastern Hebei*, 258.

¹¹ Mantetsu, *Report on Lujiazhai*, 169.

¹² *Report of the Beining Railway Economic Survey Team*, 1640.

the demand of Kaiping city (Tangshan).”¹³ Peasants sold all kinds of goods to Tangshan, from a few eggs to a fat pig, from vegetables to fruits, from grain to grain-processed products such as sesame oil and sorghum distilled wine. For an individual family, the income might be a little pocket money, but for the whole region, the total income was substantial.

Finding jobs in the cities: Peasant workers in Beijing, Tianjin and other market towns

For the five centuries from 1421 to 1928, Beijing was the capital of China for three different regimes: Ming, Qing and the Republic China. As the political and cultural center of the whole country, Beijing was the largest city in imperial China. According to G. William Skinner, in the 1840s, the population in Beijing was about 850,000.¹⁴ The 1932 census reported the population in Beijing was 1,467,537.¹⁵ Most of the residents were governmental officials, garrison troops, traveling scholars, merchants and their families. In imperial times, most of the grain consumed in Beijing was provided by the South through the rice tribute system,¹⁶ but other necessities, such as vegetables, meats and other services were provided by the peasants in the surrounding counties.

¹³ Wei Hongyun, ed., *Investigation and Research on Eastern Hebei Villages*, 281.

¹⁴ G. William Skinner ed., *The City in Late Imperial China*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977), 29.

¹⁵ Cressey, *China's Geographic Foundation*, 174.

¹⁶ During the Qing period, about 3.5 million piculs or 280,000 tons of grain (mainly rice) was transported to the capital through the grain tribute system each year. See Harold C. Hinton, *The Grain Tribute System of China (1845-1911)* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), 2.

For a long time, the peasants in the western part of Eastern Hebei, especially in Ji, Sanhe, Xianghe, Baodi and Tong counties, took advantage of nearness of the capital to find work opportunities there. In the four special service businesses, Eastern Hebei provided most of the service men and women in three of them. Most of the service men in the brothels came from Ji county, they were called the men who bring the teapots. Most of the domestic service women came from Sanhe county, they were called *Laomazi*, or “old mama,” who looked after rich men’s children and cooked for their families. The people from Baodi and Xianghe almost monopolized the barbering industry in Beijing—in the Qing Dynasty, haircutting was an important business because every male must have his hair cut periodically if he did not want to get into trouble. Under the Manchu’s rule, the slogan was “cut the hair or lose your head.” The only special profession which was not filled by Eastern Hebei peasants was eunuch—a small group but a powerful class in imperial times. Most of the eunuchs came from Qinghai and other counties located west of Tianjin.¹⁷ The overthrow of the Qing Dynasty in 1912 ended the recruitment of new eunuchs, but it had little effect on other three professionals.

As transportation improved and new cultural institutes and industries developed in Beijing and Tianjin, more and more people from Eastern Hebei found permanent or temporary employment there. In the 1930s, the Beining Railway Economic Survey Team reported that in Sanhe county, many people (male and female) went to Beijing

¹⁷ Interview with Zhang Baonian by the author in the summer of 1993. Zhang was the chief compiler of new Baodi Gazetteer at that time.

(Beijing was renamed Beiping after the Nationalists established the capital in Nanjing in 1928) to work there, “the income was important for the county’s economy.”¹⁸ Wang Yaowu, a journalist, wrote in 1934 that “most of the female domestic servants [*laomazi*] in Beiping came from Sanhe county. They came to Beiping to escape the hardness of village life. In the city, the boarding is better and it is easier to make money. If they are employed by the rich families and could win the confidence of the family heads and their wives, they could steal some power and act as managers of the households. By cheating and practicing crafts, in several years, they could save some money and then return home to enjoy the leisure life.”¹⁹ Another journalist who had a tour of Hebei counties reported that while he visited Sanhe county seat, he had not seen any females there. The reason was that “most of the females work in Beijing and Tianjin as domestic servants.” He claimed that service income was the main pillar for Sanhe’s economy.²⁰

Shajing village of Shunyi county provided a good example of how the peasants took advantage of nearness to Beijing to increase their incomes. Shunyi, a small rural county measuring nine miles east to west and seven miles north to south, lay about 25 miles north of Beijing on the Beijing-Gubeikou road. Shajing village lay half mile west of the county seat. The village population was 191 in 1895, 280 in 1912, 340 in 1931, and by 1941 when the Japanese made the village survey, there were about 75

¹⁸ *Report of the Beiping Railway Economic Survey Team*, 518.

¹⁹ Wang Yaowu, *Laobaixing dayoushi* (Ragged Verses), “Domestic female servants (1934).”

²⁰ *Ta Kong Pao*, 21 December 1930, p.4.

households with about 400 residents in the village. This means the population doubled in the village in about a half century. There was 1178.6 mu of cultivable land in the village green circle, among them 215.6 mu, or 18 percent of the total, was owned by outside landlords. On average, the family farm size was about 16 mu and was too small for a family of 5 persons. To make the situation worse, the limited land was poor for crop production because most of it was either sandy or highly alkaline. According to the survey, among the 75 households, 10 households survived solely on their farm income, 6 depended completely on non-farm income, and 6 derived their income from wages and what they produced on rented land. 53 households, or 71 percent of the total, supplemented their farm income by working outside the village. As Ramon Myers pointed out, “these data suggest that the village found it increasingly difficult to depend solely on farming.”²¹ Most of the peasants turned to Beijing to find non-farming employment.

In each winter, many peasants from Shajing went to Beijing to work at Zhengmingzai to make *migong*—a kind of sweet cake for religious ceremonies. Zhang Wendong, father of the deputy village head Zhang Rui, was the leader of the peasant workers. In 1941, he led 53 peasants to work in Beijing. Among them 14 came from his home village.²² Liu Fu, another Shajing villager, was a team leader too, but he

²¹ Myers, *The Chinese Peasant Economy*, 47.

²² Chugoku noson kanko chosa kankokai, *Chugoku noson kanko chosa* (Investigations of customary practices in rural China) (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1952-1958) (here after cited as CN, CN), 2: 56.

worked in another shop to make *migong* in Beijing.²³ The peasants worked in Beijing for about three months from the tenth to beginning of the first month of Chinese calendar. Besides free boarding, the peasant workers could receive different payments according to their skills—mostly depending on how many years they worked in this industry. In 1941, the wage for the beginners was 5 or 6 yuan a working season (about three months). For those who worked a second year and became a skilled worker, the payment was 30–40 yuan. For the bosses, Zhang Wendong and his son Zhang Rui, the payments were 50 and 75 yuan respectively. Another source said Zhang Wendong's income from *migong* making was 300 yuan a year.²⁴

Besides working as *migong* makers in winter, some peasants sent their sons to work in Beijing or the county seat as apprentices or clerks, others engaged in small businesses such as incense making and selling. A summary of the kinds of non-farming activities and numbers of persons engaged in them appears in Table 5-1. Those who had no special skills went to the county seat to look for odd jobs. There was a daily labor market there. The poor peasants went there in the early morning to wait for the prospective employers.

In 1941, the Japanese investigators made a detailed investigation about family income and expense of seventeen households from different social and economic classes in Shajing village. They thought these samples could represent the whole village. To evaluate the importance of non-farming income on peasants' budgets, one

²³ Ibid., 2: 5.

²⁴ Ibid., 2: 23.

Table 5-1, Non-farming engagements in Shajing village, 1941

Non-farming business description	Engaged persons
Doctors and teachers, working in the surrounding villages and towns	4
Apprenticing or working in grocery stores in Beijing	14
Bone carving in Beijing	4
Transporting goods in Beijing, Tongzhou or the county seat	5
Apprenticing or working in grocery stores in other towns	14
Making and peddling incense, candy, sesame seed cakes and others	12
Blacksmith and carpenter	2
Total	55

Source: CN, *CN*, 2:1-24.

must first change the agricultural harvesting and family consumption into cash income and expense. The Japanese investigators introduced a unit called "adult equivalent" to calculate how much grain was needed to feed a family. According to their definition, individuals between 12 and 60 years of age were counted as 1.0 adult equivalent; between 8 and 11 and above 61 counted as 0.8 adult equivalent; children between 3 and 7 years were 0.5 and those under 2 as 0. A household was scored according to its adult equivalent. They also decided to make 6 *dou* of wheat and millet of grain and seven *dou* of sorghum equivalent to 1 *shi* of grain. It was then estimated that 1.0 adult equivalent should consume at least 3 *shi* of grain per year. With these units the annual households consumption requirements were obtained for the seventeen sample households. The amount of farm output produced by each household was also calculated and standardized according to the above food units. The actual annual farming harvests and calculated annual consumption are shown in Table 5-2.

Table 5-2, Grain production and consumption for 17 households
in Shajing village, 1941 (unit: *shi*)

Household	Annual production	Annual consumption	Deficit or surplus
Yang Ze	15.1	10.5	4.6
Ren Zhengang	15.6	12.0	3.6
Du Xiang	4.3	19.8	-15.5
Li Ruyuan	36.2	40.5	-4.3
Zhang Cheng	11.2	16.2	-5.0
Zhao Tingkui	18.8	24.0	-5.2
Jing Defu	11.2	10.5	0.7
Du Shoutian	9.3	19.5	-10.2
Zhang Linrong	12.0	19.5	-7.5
Zhang Shoujun	18.9	12.0	6.9
Li Shulin	5.3	14.4	-9.1
Fu Ju	7.7	11.4	-3.7
Li Xiufang	14.3	17.7	-3.4
Zhang Yongren	12.3	30.6	-18.3
Chong Wenqi	1.0	13.5	-12.5
Zhang Shouren	8.2	12.0	-3.8
Yang Run	7.6	14.4	-6.8
Total	209.0	298.5	-89.5

Source: CN, CN, 2;270-291.

Table 5-2 reveals that only 24 percent of the sample households (4 of 17) produced enough grain to meet their annual consumption needs. The remainder had to purchase grain with income earned from marketing vegetables, working outside the village, or borrowing. Table 5-3 shows the 17 households' money-equivalent incomes and expenses.

Table 5-3, Household budget for 17 households in Shajing, 1941 (unit: yuan)

Household	Total income	Farming income	Non-farming income	Expenditure	Balance
Li Ruyuan	2,084	1,884	200	1,983	101
Li Xiufang	962	867	95	1,045	-83
Chong Wenqi	405	25	380	456	-51
Zhang Shoujun	745	535	210	715	30
Ren Zhengang	570	570	0	815	-245
Li Shulin	417	192	225	417	0
Zhang Yongrin	1,208	1,138	70	1,276	-68
Du Shoutian	802	532	270	928	-126
Du Xiang	742	542	100	945	-203
Jing Defu	924	664	260	1,055	-131
Yang Ze	980	935	45	1,042	-62
Yang Run	542	245	297	1,057	-515
Zhang Cheng	683	443	240	708	-25
Zhao Tingkui	1,399	1,199	200	1,439	-40
Fu Ju	587	337	250	559	28
Zhang Shouren	563	283	280	1,233	-670
Zhang Linrong	676	676	0	759	-63
Total	14,289	11,067	3,122	16,432	-2,143

Source: CN, *CN*, 2: 270-291.

It should be pointed out that in Table 5-3, the “non-farming income” was a little lower than the actual amount the peasants earned because it only counted the cash or wage income but did not include the boarding expense paid by the employers. Even under this calculation, among the 17 households, only 2 depended solely on agricultural income, 3 had more non-farming income than farming income. On average, about one quarter (22 percent) of the total income came from non-farming sector. As the grain

harvest was already short for the peasants own needs (see Table 5-2), the peasants were unable to sell much of their grain to pay taxes or to buy other living necessities.

Obviously, without working outside of farming, it was impossible for the peasants to make a living.

Another Japanese investigated village, Xiaojie in Tong county, provided detailed information about the importance of non-farming income in peasant life. Tong county is located about 24 li east of Beijing and less than 200 li northwest of Tianjin. The North Canal connected Tong county seat with Beijing and Tianjin. In the Qing Dynasty, Tongzhou, the administrative seat of Tong county, was the terminal of the Grand Canal and the deposit site of the tribute rice. Many people made a living on grain trading there.

Like Shajing village in Shunyi county, Xiaojie lay near the county seat (about 6 li southeast). In 1935, among the 164 households which resided in the village, 19 households, or 12 percent, totally lived on non-farming income. Only 45 households, or 27 percent, lived solely on farming. More than half of the residents (90 households or 55 percent of the total) supplemented their income by working in non-farming industries. The remaining 10 households, or 6 percent, made their living as farming laborers.²⁵ Table 5-4 shows the kinds of industries and the incomes for the 90 households which worked in other industries besides farming on their own farms. For

²⁵ Mantetsu, *Report on Xiaojie*, 27.

Table 5-4, Non-farming engagement and income for 90 households
in Xiaojie village, 1935

Description of the non-farming works	Households	Non-farming income (yuan)
Working as merchants or peddlers	26	3,209
Working as factory workers	22	1,096
Working as merchant and factory workers	9	690
Working as farming laborers on other farms	21	906
Working as non-farming day-laborers	8	200
Working as tomb guard	4	125
Total	90	6,226

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on Xiaojie*, 142-143.

Table 5-5, Non-farming occupations and incomes for 19 households
in Xiaojie, 1935

Kinds of business	Households	Income (yuan)
Commerce	12	1,100
Factory workers	4	290
Non-farming laborers	3	160
Total	19	1,550

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on Xiaojie*, 142-143.

the 19 households which did no farming work, most were engaged in commerce. Their occupations and incomes are shown Table 5-5.

According to the same investigation, Xiaojie village had 983 residents (499 males and 484 females),²⁶ among them 156 persons, or 16 percent of the total village

²⁶ Ibid., 26.

population (31 percent of the male population), worked outside of the village. Besides one or two students and another one who worked in Manchuria, all others worked in the cities. Among them more than half worked in Beijing, and the second largest number worked in Tongzhou. The investigators made it clear that there were five reasons for the people to leave the village and work in the cities. The first one was that the family farm was too small to absorb the surplus labor. The second was there were few proper sideline industries in the village. The third was that the village was near to the cities, such as Beijing and Tongzhou. The fourth reason was that it was easier to earn and save money by working outside than in the village. The last one was that people were tired of the hard work of farming and desired the urbanite living style.²⁷

In 1935, the gross agricultural income for Xiaojie village was about 27,167 yuan.²⁸ If we deduct 10 percent of the gross income as expense for seeds and feed for domestic animals, the net farming income was about 24,450 yuan. In the same year, the income from outside village working was 6,161 yuan. It was 25 percent of the net farming income or 20 percent of the total village income.

As Tianjin developed quickly as a commercial and industrial center, many people in the villages of Baodi and Ninghe found jobs there. According to the Beining Railway Economic Survey Team's report, Baodi county was divided into ten wards. Most of those who went to Tianjin to work there as masons came from the eighth ward,

²⁷ Ibid., 144-45.

²⁸ Ibid., 119.

those who worked in Manchuria as bathing-house runners and barbers came from sixth and seventh wards, and those who went to Beiping and Tianjin to run shoe and hat shops mostly were residents of the fourth ward. In the county seat, many people went to Shanxi, Inner-Mongolia, Gansu, Beiping and Tianjin to sell locally produced cloth.²⁹ For the whole county, the percentage of adult males employed in each main industry is shown in Table 5-6.

Table 5-6, Occupations engaged by adult males in Baodi county, 1935

Industry or occupation	Employed numbers	Percentage
Civil and military service men	7,060	4.86%
Farmers and farming related laborers	105,459	72.55
Merchants and commercial employees	15,667	10.78
Industrial and transportation workers	9,378	6.45
Teachers, lawyers, doctors and journalists	1,079	0.74
Others	6,717	4.62
Total	145,360	100.00

Source: *Report of the Beiping Railway Economic Survey Team*, 1061-62.

Note: The 14,620 students are excluded from the source table because studying is not a professional occupation. Also, the wrong total figures in the source table are corrected.

Table 5-6 shows that in Baodi county, a little less than three quarters of the work force (assuming women only provided supplementary work in all businesses) engaged in farming. The other one quarter found work out of agriculture—most of them doing business in commerce or working in the factories. In Zhaoxiazhuang, a village famous

²⁹ *Report of the Beiping Railway Economic Survey Team*, 1062.

for its handicraft weaving, even in the farming busy season, in addition to the 40 day-laborers who worked outside the village, 35 others still worked in the shops or factories in Tianjin.³⁰

There was no case study of the villages around Tangshan, such as the Japanese did in Shajing and Xiaojie. But the few interviews with the village or town headmen reveal that the villages in or near Tangshan were transformed into a semi-urban area quickly. Chengzizhuang, a village located inside the Tangshan city administrative limit but 3 li out of the city center, had 960 households in 1941. Among them only 300, or 31 percent, were old residents and engaged in farming, the others were new comers. The number of the households tripled but the amount of cropping land was reduced two-thirds as the textile, electric and cement companies bought the land for industrial use. Even the old residents had to work in the factories, they only worked on the farms in the busy season.³¹

Songxiezhuang, a small village which only had 50 households in the early twentieth century, had 350 households but only 300 mu of farming land in 1941. Like Chengzizhuang, farming became a sideline activity and most of the residents worked in the factories of cement or textile, or worked on the railway or in stone quarries.³² Comparing the wages, it is clear that an industrial worker earned a little higher than the farming laborer. For an ordinary worker, the daily payment was 1.5 yuan without

³⁰ Mantetsu, *Report on the Investigation of General Conditions of the Sixteen Eastern Hebei Counties*, 141.

³¹ CN, *CN*, 4: 5-6.

³² *Ibid.*, 6-7.

boarding, the skilled worker could earn as much as 2.5 yuan. But for the farming laborers, even in the busy season, the payment was 1.0 or a little more plus two meals a day.³³

From the examples of Shajing, Xiaojie and other three villages, it is clear that in western part of Eastern Hebei, about 25 percent of the villagers had permanent or temporary outside village work and the income from these work composed about 25 percent of the total income for the peasants there.

Going to Manchuria and the rise of the merchant-landlord class

Besides going to Beijing, Tianjin and Tangshan to work in the commerce or industrial factories, some of the peasants in Eastern Hebei went beyond the Great Wall as peddlers, businessmen or laborers. Those who went through the passes, such as Nankou, Gubeikou and Xifengkou (see Figure 5-1), to Chahar and Jehol were called going “outside the passes” (*kouwai*). Besides the merchants who did business there, such as exporting locally produced cloth in Chengde and Chifeng or importing grain, hides and furs on return, most of those who went beyond the passes were poor peasants. In the slack season, they took several pieces of native cloth or other manufactured goods beyond the Great Wall to exchange for raw pig bristle, hides, furs and other products from the semi-agricultural residents. The Beining Economic Survey Team found that in Zunhua county, some peasants always collected native cloth, candy, paper

³³ Ibid., 6.

and other miscellaneous goods and sold them along the Great Wall. On return, they brought in all kinds of hides and furs and resold them at the county seat market.³⁴

There were also some peasants who had little or had lost all their land in their native villages who went beyond the Great Wall to make a new living. In Dabeiguan village, Pinggu county, four people, Zhang Yulou, Zhang Hailou, Zhang Yuchen and Zhang Yuting, moved to Jehol. The last two were brothers (there were four sons in the family), each of them had only 1 mu of land, obviously, they could not make a living on such small parcel and were forced to leave the village. Their lands were returned to their father for cultivating. Zhang Yulou and Zhang Hailou inherited 12 mu and 22 mu of land respectively, after they went to Jehol, their lands were managed by their relatives in other villages (see Figure 3-1).³⁵

The report did not explain what these four people did in Jehol. Presumably they worked there first as farming laborers and eventually opened or bought lands for themselves and settled there. As Philip Huang pointed out, in the Qing Dynasty, Jehol was developed for crop production. Compared with other developed [for farming] area, this new frontier had more managerial farmers and farming laborers.³⁶ In the early twentieth century, as not all of the land was developed beyond the Great Wall, people still could find opportunities there.

³⁴ *Report of the Beining Railway Economic Survey Team*, 1305.

³⁵ Mantetsu, *Report on Dabeiguan*, 10.

³⁶ Huang, *The Peasant Economy*, 100, Table 5.4. In the total 18 cases of landlord and tenant law-suits in Hebei and Shandong (1736-1796), 4 cases (22 percent of the total) happened beyond the Great Wall. This high percentage means in that area there were more landlords and farming laborers.

Considering all those who went beyond the Great Wall, more peasants in Eastern Hebei went through Shanhaiguan and other small passes in Linyu county to Manchuria. People called this population movement as “going to Manchuria.”³⁷ Before 1900, part of Manchuria was forbidden to Han-Chinese emigrants and those who went to Manchuria must get a license from the local government which stated their purposes of traveling, they also paid a little fee.³⁸ By the twentieth century, all of Manchuria was opened for emigrants and as the Jingfeng Railway (also called Beining Railway) was completed, more people, especially those in Leting, Luan, Changli, Funing and Linyu, went to Manchuria to work there. The Custom Officials at Qinhuangdao reported in 1911 that

Many of the natives of this prefecture [Yongping Prefecture] are engaged in trade at Moukden, Changchun, Kirin, Harbin, and other Manchurian trade centers, and on questioning people regarding their absent relatives, the reply invariably given is that they are away in the ‘Three Eastern Provinces’ [Manchuria] trading. There is, however, no record of the number of people who have left.³⁹

In the 1930s, as Manchuria was cut off from China proper, fewer people went there to do business than in the earlier decades, but the absolute number was still very high. Incomplete statistics reveal the numbers of people in Eastern Hebei who went to Manchuria in the nine months in 1935 (see Table 5-7).

³⁷ The native people called “going to Manchuria” as “*chuang guandong*,” “*xia guandong*,” “*zou guandong*” or “*pao guandong*.” “*Guandong*” means “east of Shanhaiguan” or Manchuria. *Chuang* means forcing one’s way in or braving the journey, this word indicated the difficulties in the early days of going to Manchuria. *Xia*, *zou* and *pao* all mean going.

³⁸ *Linyu xianzhi* (Linyu Gazetteer) (1929), vol. 11.

³⁹ C.I.M.C., *Decennial Reports, 1902-11*, 190

Table 5-7, Emigrants from Eastern Hebei to Manchuria, April to December, 1935

County	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Changli	1,402	2,436	22	1,842	17	779	24	20	9	6,551
Leting	482	1,770	17	1,250	2	862	108	40	92	4,623
Funing	664	1,328	1	1,011		505	90	77	170	3,846
Ninghe	480	602	139	482	207	340	88	52	45	2,435
Baodi	899	582	85	244	94	202	55	52	41	2,254
Luan	695	100	51	584	31	356	15	83	58	1,973
Yutian	552	350	3	201	141	296	84	114	39	1,780
Fengrun	578	607	4	6	28	306	11	76	11	1,627
Linyu	407	696	2		1	240	82	59	79	1,566
Qian-an	366	244	2	105	35	108	30	32	9	931
Lulong	290	293		152	1	114	20	12	39	921
Ji	175	171		83	19	78	22	14	22	584
Zunhua	119	54	1	41	10	9	16	17	15	282
Xianghe	129	13	61	22	10	20	10	6	5	276
Tong	52	47	3	49	16	16	12	7	10	212
Sanhe	44	13	13	9	18	14	5	1	2	119
Shunyi	10	12		11	3	4	14	3	18	75
Miyun	1	2		11	4	3	7		9	37
Pinggu		6	13	5	1	5	2		4	36
Changping	5			6	2	5	1	1		20
Huirou	3								1	4
Total	7,353	9,326	417	6,114	640	4,262	696	666	678	30,152

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on the Investigation of General Conditions of the Sixteen Counties in Eastern Hebei*, 218-219.

As Table 5-7 shows, about half of those who went to Manchuria came from the three counties of Changli, Leting and Funing (15,020 out of 30,152). Regarding the time of going to Manchuria, most of the emigrants went there in the spring (April and May). This accorded with Li Dazhao's observation. Li was a native of Leting county, he was a pioneer of the Chinese communist movement and one of the founders of Chinese Communist Party. In early May of 1917, when Li returned to his home village, he stopped at a hotel in Changli county seat, he met many hometown people (including some females) who stopped there while going to Manchuria. Li commented that time (May) was the season for those merchants who came home to return to Manchuria. Li also stated that most of the merchants in Manchuria came from the seven counties of former Yongping Prefecture, among them Changli, Leting, Linyu and Funing provided the largest.⁴⁰

The local gazetteers make it clear that going to Manchuria on a large scale was a twentieth century development. The *Changli Gazetteer* compiled in Tongzhi Period (1862-1874) described the commerce in Changli in the nineteenth century as follows:

Changli has no rich merchants and entrepreneurs because it is not a center of trading and manufacturing. The grains [selling in Changli] are imported from Manchuria and the silk and satin are brought from Souzhou, Hangzhou and Beijing. Most of the residents are native people and have lived here for many generations. There are few new comers. Although there are periodic markets in several big towns, the markets are opened for a limited time—from sun rise to sun set. There are no luxuries but only everyday needed goods in the periodic markets, such as cotton cloth, fish and salt. Almost all people lived on farming and are satisfied with the simple rural life.⁴¹

⁴⁰ *Li Daozhao yu guxiang* (Li Daozhao and his home town) (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian, 1994), 339.

⁴¹ *Changli xianzhi* (Changli Gazetteer), compiled in Tongzhi period (1862-1874).

In the 1933, the compilers of the new *Changli Gazetteer* had a different story about the commercial activity in Changli county:

As the Beining Railway runs from west to east across the county and railway stations have been built at the south gate of the county seat, Anshan and Shimen, it is easier to transport domestic and foreign made goods. The business of commerce became prosperous. The young boys who can read a little always leave the villages and engage in business when they reach 14 or 15 years old. Even the illiterates also enter all kinds of stores as apprentices to learn to do business in commerce. Among those who left the villages to do business in the outside world, about 20 percent of them had business in the home county, 80 to 90 percent of them went to Manchuria, and very few of them went west to Beijing or Tianjin. As these boys grow up, they could save a little money and some of them become rich.⁴²

According to legend and the investigation materials, Leting peasants went to Manchuria in large numbers first. In the second half of the nineteenth century, a poor man named Liu Xinting went to Manchuria. He found that the farming tools, especially hoes, were in demand on a large scale in Manchuria. He also observed that the price of cotton and cloth which Manchuria did not produce were higher than those inside of the Great Wall. He borrowed a little capital from his relatives to begin his business of transporting hoes, cotton and cloth to Manchuria and brought back grains, beans, tobacco and indigo to sell in his home area. He made a fortune from this business. His descendants continued his business and opened branch stores all over Manchuria and Eastern Hebei. In the twentieth century, Lius were famous for their wealth and were called “the number one rich family in Eastern Hebei.”⁴³

⁴² *Changli xianzhi* (Changli Gazetteer), (1933), vol. 4.

⁴³ Wei Hongyun, *Investigation and Research on Eastern Hebei Villages*, 345.

Few people could be so lucky and successful as the Liu family was, but a lot of those who went to Manchuria did make some money and improved their social and economic statuses. The family of Li Dazhao provides another example.

Li was a native of Daheituo, a village in Leting county. According to the genealogy of the Li family, Li Dazhao's ancestors settled in Daheituo in the early Ming Dynasty under the government's calling [to settle around the Capital]. By 1811, as the harvest was poor that year, the Li clan had no money to maintain its ancestors' tombs and keep normal sacrifice for their ancestors. In 1863, the Li clan seemed to recover from the natural disaster and under Li Weiwo's [Daozhao's great grandfather] suggestion, the Lis renewed their lineage organization and activity of sacrificing for their ancestors. They bought "sacrificing" land (the income from that land was used for the ceremony), built a tomb-guarding house and planted trees around the tombs.⁴⁴ We don't know how the Li family made a recovery and whether Li Weimo went to Manchuria, but it is certain that Li Ruzhen (1827-1907), Dazhao's grandfather, went to Manchuria and made a fortune. He ran grocery stores in Changchun, Wanbaoshan and other places in Manchuria when he was young. In 1881, he rebuilt the family residence. The new house-compound had three courts and about 20 rooms. Because Li Dazhao was born in this building, the house is still kept in good conditions and is open for visitors. As the local people said, this house represents a typical merchant-landlord residence in Eastern Hebei. Even by today's standards, the residence was well designed

⁴⁴ See "the introduction to the genealogy of Li family of Daheituo," a broken stone stele which was established in 1863. Cited from *Li Dazhao and His Home Town*, 11.

and built. Obviously, Dazhao's grandfather was a successful business man. A stone stele established before the village temple indicated that Li Ruzhen had the title of "quasi-ninth rank"—the lowest bureaucratic rank in Qing Dynasty.⁴⁵ As the family genealogy did not note an official post for Li Ruzhen, it can be assumed that he bought the title for himself. Like most retired merchants in old China, Li Ruzhen bought several dozen mu of land and increased the family holding to about 100 mu.⁴⁶ He became a merchant-landlord. At the same time, he encouraged his adopted son (Li Renrong, Dazhao's father who died seven months before Dazhao's birth in 1889) and grandson to study for the civil service exams.

Li was not the richest or only family who made a fortune by going to Manchuria in Daheitu. The other big names in the village were Gu and Zhao. Dazhao's wife came from the Zhao family. Like Dazhao's grandfather, her grandfather also once worked in Manchuria. Her father—Zhao Wendong (1847-1903)—went to Manchuria too and had two wives. According to the investigation, Zhao's home also had more than twenty rooms and more than 100 mu of land.⁴⁷ Zhao's family was a little richer than, or at least as rich as the Li family. From occupation to family wealth, both the Li and Zhao families were good matches for a marriage contract. The Lis and Zhaos in Daheitu represented those who went to Manchuria in the second half of the nineteenth century, it appears that it was easier to make money at that time.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 13. The stone stele was established in 1887.

⁴⁶ *Li Dazhao guju* (Li Dazhao's former residence), (Shijiazhuang, Hebei renmin, 1996), 15.

⁴⁷ *Li Dazhao and His Home Town*, 28.

By the twentieth century, going to Manchuria became a fad in Eastern Hebei. Both poor and rich people went there to fulfill their dreams of moving up the social and economic ladder. In Xinkaikou, a small village located in the southern part of Leting county, among the 146 residents, 39, or 27 percent of the total, worked in Manchuria in the 1930s. One family had more than 40 mu of land, which for the standard of that time meant it was a middle-class family, at least, they had enough land to cultivate. But all three sons of the family went to Manchuria at the age of about twenty. The family land was cultivated by two hired year-laborers. The eldest son worked in a grocery store in Changchun, the second worked in a grain-trading shop in Zhaodong, the youngest began to work as an apprentice at a woolen mill in Harbin. In the 1930s and early 1940s, it was more difficult to do business in Manchuria because the Japanese began to tighten their control over the economy there, especially over commercial activity. Few of the emigrants could make any money and remit it to their families at home. When asked why they went to Manchuria instead of working on the family farm, they answered that it was the fad: people thought working in Manchuria as clerks or managers not only could bring in more money but also improve the family social status.⁴⁸

As so many people from Eastern Hebei worked in Manchuria, they almost monopolized the grocery and other small businesses there. They became a unique social and economic class and were called *laotan-er bang* (*bang* means gang or clique).

⁴⁸ Interview made in Xinkaikou in 1996 by the author.

Qi Changting, a native of Changli county, who worked in Manchuria from 1902 to 1926, explained that *laotan-er* meant “honest people.”⁴⁹ But another explanation might be more believable: *laotan-er* was the mispronunciation of *leting* because the local people called *leting* as *laoting*, it was the nickname for those emigrants who came from Leting, Changli and Luan. In Manchuria, people called those who came from Linyu and Funing as *hua-laotan-er*, *hua* means quasi or somewhat alike. Qi Changting boasted to the Japanese investigators that “wherever the sparrow could reach, there was a *laotan-er* [in Manchuria].” According to him, most of the *laotan-er* engaged in grocery stores or the grain trading business, the *hua-laotan-er* engaged in cash-shops and the buying and selling second-hand clothes.⁵⁰

Going to Manchuria not only alleviated the population pressure to some degree, but also brought huge amount of cash to Eastern Hebei. According to one investigation, before 1931, the emigrant workers remitted about 9,000,000 yuan to Leting county alone. In 1936, although fewer people went to Manchuria and it was more difficult to make money there under the Japanese occupation, the emigrant workers still remitted about 4,000,000 yuan a year to their home county.⁵¹

Houjiaying, a village in Changli county surveyed in detail by the Japanese, provided a case for the study of going to Manchuria. Houjiaying is located 10 kilometers south of the county seat, or 70 kilometers from the Manchuria border. When

⁴⁹ CN, CN, 5: 252.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 5: 252.

⁵¹ Mantetsu, *Report on the Investigation of General Conditions of the Sixteen Counties in Eastern Hebei*, 239.

the investigation was made in 1942, there were 117 households with approximately 704 residents in the village. The total cultivable land was 2,979 mu in 1941. Among the 108 households which held some land, 75 households, or nearly 70 percent of total, had less than 30 mu. On average, each person held 4.23 mu, it was a little higher than the average size in Hebei province, but was still not enough to make a living—the villagers said they needed 6 mu to support one person.⁵² Going to Manchuria became an important part of the village economy. The statistics show that about 50 adult males from about 34 households worked in Manchuria in the first four decades of twentieth century.⁵³ The following examples show who went and what they did in Manchuria.

In the nineteenth century, some peasants in Houjiaying had already left the village and gone beyond Shanhaiguan to do business in Manchuria. Hou Dingqi, father of the former village head, ran a grocery store in Suizhong county as early as in the 1880s. Suizhong was located in the southern part of Fengtian Province. It was an important passing stop along the corridor of going to Manchuria. Hou Dingqi not only gave aid, such as providing food and lodging, to his home villagers passing through Suizhong, but also actively searched and located jobs for these people. The beneficiaries of Hou's help dedicated a plaque praising Dingqi as a philanthropist.⁵⁴ The recollections showed that Hou Shupan, Liu Hui, Hou Huangsheng and Hou Yuanzhen also worked in Manchuria in the late nineteenth century.

⁵² CN, *CN*, 5: 5.

⁵³ This is my calculation according to the household survey made by the Japanese investigators in 1941. As the peasants' recollection was not accurate, the resulting calculation might not be 100 percent accurate.

⁵⁴ CN, *CN*, 5: 37.

It is easy to imagine that the poorest people—those who lost their lands and could not make a living in the home village—went to Manchuria to make a new beginning. This is correct but not complete. The investigation material showed that people from all social and economic classes went to Manchuria and they held a common hope—to make money and return home to buy land.

Most of the sons of the big but poor families went to Manchuria. For example, Hou Shupan had three brothers, the family had only 19 mu of poor land. As the eldest one of the brothers, Shupan had to go to Manchuria when he was 17 years old. He worked in a business of grain trade in Suizhong for more than 40 years. His two brothers, the second and the fourth, also worked in Manchuria, one was in Harbin and the other was in Mukden, both of them worked as cooks. The third brother, who cultivated the family land and supported their parents at home, also went to Manchuria in 1937 after the parents died. The family land was sold to pay the cost of the funerals. The third brother worked as an accountant in a hat shop in Shenyang. Hou Shupan returned to the village at age of 65 in 1937, but his only son still worked in Manchuria. When the investigation was made in 1942, Hou Shupan, his wife, his daughter-in-law and two grandsons lived in the village. He did not mention that he bought any land, perhaps he lived on his savings or the remittances from his son.⁵⁵

Hou Yuanzhen also had three brothers. When the household was divided among the four brothers in 1920, the family had only 7 mu land. Although the land was

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 5: 69.

inherited by the third brother to support the parents, all four brothers went to Manchuria to make a living. Three of them worked in the grain business as clerks or manual laborers, the other one worked in a money-shop (*qianpu*, a business of currency exchange and money lending). Like Hou Shupan, Hou Yuanzhen returned to the village in 1937 to spend his remaining years.⁵⁶

Hou Yongkuan and his two brothers divided the household in 1890. Each of them received 3 mu of land. Yongkuan had four sons, except for the second son, the other three worked in Manchuria (in Shenyang). The eldest one was a merchant with little capital. Both the third and the fourth sons ran hemp bag shops. In 1942, the family still was very poor, Yongkuan had to rent land from other villagers, which he worked with his second son. As Yongkuan said, the family was so poor that the four sons did not divide the household—there was nothing to be divided.⁵⁷

Middle class people also went to Manchuria. Hou Jinduo and Hou Jinsheng were brothers. Jinsheng was adopted by his aunt. Both Jinduo and Jinsheng inherited about 40 mu land. It was enough for each family to cultivate without needing to rent other land. But neither Jinduo nor Jinsheng stayed at home to cultivate their own lands, both of them went to Manchuria to make their fortunes. They worked in different grocery stores in Xi-an, a town located south of Shipingjie. Because there were no male

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 5: 91-92.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 5: 244-245.

adults at home, Jinduo had to lease half of his land to other villagers and Jinsheng had his land farmed by his brother-in-law without collecting rent.⁵⁸

Hou Baotian, a upper-middle class man with 70 mu of land when he served as the village head and village school supervisor in the 1920s, went to Manchuria too and did not return until the investigation was made. The villagers did not explain how Hou Baotian lost half of his land in the 1930s, but it is clear that he was not forced to leave the village due to economic need because by 1942 he still had 35 mu which was enough to support his family. Obviously, Hou Baotian went to Manchuria to look for new opportunities.⁵⁹

Among the villagers who went to Manchuria, quite a few of them were landlords or sons of landlords. Liu Wanju was adopted by his uncle and inherited about 170 mu land. He had four sons, the eldest was Liu Binkui. Although Binkui was one of the sons of the richest landlords in the village, he was not satisfied with working as a farmer. From 1918 to 1929, he worked in Shenyang and Fushun as a clerk in grocery stores. Binkui's second brother was a school teacher, the third brother also worked in Manchuria for a period. After Liu Wanju died, Binkui had to return to the village to run the family farm, but his fourth brother still worked in Manchuria as a forestry bureau employee.⁶⁰

The investigation material shows that population pressure or natural disaster—

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 5: 85, 296.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 5: 42.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 5: 243-45.

Houjiaying was always being flooded in the summer—was not the main or only reason for going to Manchuria. Looking for new opportunity and making money were the main cause. Kong Ziming, who worked in Manchuria from 1915 to 1935 and served as deputy village head in 1942, made it clear that everyone went to Manchuria in the hope of making money to buy more land. Kong himself added 6 mu to the 10.5 mu he inherited from his father after he returned to the village.⁶¹ Of course, not everyone could make money and return home gloriously. Hou Ruiwen said that he could only earn enough to keep himself from starving when he worked in Manchuria as a peddler. His brother did not save any money in Manchuria either.⁶² All villagers admitted that it was harder to do business in Manchuria after the Japanese invasion, but most of them claimed that it was easier to make money by doing business than working in the fields. Only Hou Changrong did not think so. He said that it was better to rent land or sharecrop with the landlord than to work in Manchuria, but, his condition was “if you have money or seed.”⁶³

As the examples show, all the emigrants worked in non-farming industries. Most of them worked in grocery stores as managers, clerks or apprentices. Other worked as tanners, blacksmiths or cooks. Only one person, Hou Baoshan’s brother, managed a farm of 600 mu in Dalai County. Some of the emigrants did not stay in one place or one industry while they worked in Manchuria. Hou Yuangong, the fourth son

⁶¹ Ibid., 5: 239.

⁶² Ibid., 5: 63-64.

⁶³ Ibid., 5: 193.

from a middle class family, worked in Manchuria from 1910 to 1935. He began to work in a pawn shop in Suizhong county when he was 16 years old in 1910. Two years later, he worked in a grocery store in Hailong county, working there for four years. Then, he transferred to a hotel in Tongliao and worked there for only two years and moved again. This time he worked in a jewelry shop in Shenyang for another two years. His last stop was Changling, where he worked in a money shop for nine years. While he worked in Manchuria, 11 mu of his land was rented to other villagers and his family (wife and children) only cultivated the remaining 4.5 mu.⁶⁴

As managers or clerks of a grocery store or other business, most emigrants from Houjiaying could read and write. In fact, almost all of them received several years education at the private or village schools. While their illiterate fathers and brother worked on the fields, these “educated” emigrants worked in non-farming industries in Manchuria.

There is no record of how much money these emigrants earned outside of the village but all materials indicate that the remittances from Manchuria were huge in the early twentieth century. The effect of this “outside earned money” on the village economy was obvious. In 1942, among the nine richest families in Houjiaying, six of them became rich in their own generation through working in Manchuria. Hou Qingchang’s father held only 16.5 mu land in the late nineteenth century. From 1897 on, Qingchang had worked in Shenyang. At the beginning, he worked in a Chinese fan

⁶⁴ Ibid., 5: 94.

shop as an apprentice, then, he became the clerk and manager of the shop. Eventually, he was able to buy more than 100 mu of land in the home village and become one of the biggest landlords.⁶⁵ According to the villagers' story, Hou Baolian's family had to live on begging in his father's generation. Baolian and his brother worked in Manchuria for thirty years and saved enough money to buy 110 mu land, they became new landlords in the village.⁶⁶ Hou Yuanlai and Hou Yuanjin were brothers, at the beginning, they were landless peddlers in the village. As the living was so hard they had to ask their friends and relatives to introduce them to work in Manchuria. They worked as apprentices first, after several years, they saved some money to open their own hemp bag shops. The two brothers bought 110 mu land also and both of them became absentee landlords.⁶⁷ In Houjiaying, only one of the richest villagers—Liu Wande—did not go to Manchuria. He inherited his property from his father. But he did not depend on farming alone, he ran a chinaware shop in the village and taught in a primary school at the county seat.⁶⁸

As many adult males went to Manchuria and some of them brought money back to buy land, the land was amassed in several landlords' hands and farming by hired laborers developed in this area. Li Dazhao noted that in Leting county, most landlords

⁶⁵ Ibid., 5: 153, 181.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 5: 89-90, 151, 175.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 5: 152-53.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 5: 42, 151.

Table 5-8, Land distribution in Sangyuan village, Leting county, 1936

Land holding	Households	Percent	Land-held (mu)	Percent
No land	17	33.33%	0	0.00%
<10 mu	8	15.69	46	2.85
10-19.99 mu	4	7.84	52	3.22
20-29.99 mu	4	7.84	86.5	5.36
30-39.99 mu	4	7.84	133	8.24
40-49.99 mu	3	5.88	126	7.81
50-59.99 mu	2	3.92	106	6.57
60-69.99 mu	1	1.96	60	3.72
70-79.99 mu	3	5.88	212	13.14
80-89.99 mu	1	1.96	80	4.96
>90 mu	4	7.84	712	44.13
Total	51	100.00	1,613.5	100.00

Source: Mantetsu, Tenshin jimusho chosaka, *Kahokusho noson jittai chosa shiryō* (Investigation Materials Regarding Actual Conditions of Villages in Hebei Province: Dongyangqiu Village in Wangdu County and other 18 Villages) (Tianjin, 1936), 94.

went to Manchuria to do business and hired year-laborers to farm the land.⁶⁹ Sangyun, another village in Leting county, provided an example. In 1936, there were 51 households in Sangyuan village. The land distribution is shown in Table 5-8.

As Table 5-8 shows, among the 51 households, one third of them had no land at all. On the other extreme, four households (8 percent of the total) held 44 percent of the total land in the village. The investigator made it clear that the main reason of land-holding polarization was the result of going to Manchuria. All four big landlords in the

⁶⁹ *Li Dazhao and His Home Town*, 363. A note to a proverb which said “the weak horse lowers his head, a chaff fed laborer does poor work.” According to Li Dazhao, this proverb warned the landlords to not treat their hired laborers too poorly.

village accumulated their wealth first by doing business in Manchuria and then bought land at home. The other way of amassing land was through money-lending. The poor peasants always had to borrow a little from those who made some money in Manchuria. As a condition, they put up their lands as a guarantee for the loan. When they failed to repay the debts, the lands were confiscated by the money-lenders.⁷⁰

As in the case in Xinkaikou, because the adult males went to Manchuria, most of the farming work was done by hired laborers in Sangyuan village. The middle peasants who had 25 to 60 mu of land hired one or two year-laborers. For those who held 70 mu or more, three or four year-laborers were hired.⁷¹ In the busy seasons, day-laborers were also needed. As a result, a day-laborer market was developed in the nearby town of Tangjiahe. In the early morning (4-5 am.), the laborers assembled there to wait for hiring. They brought hoes or sickles with them and bargained with the employers. After the agreement was reached, the laborer followed the employer to their home to work. They always worked from 6 am to 7 pm with three or four periods of rest. The employers provided three meals and after the dinner the daily wage was paid. At the same time, the day-laborer made sure if he was needed the next day. After that, he took his tools to go home. In Sangyuan, most day laborers were hired by the home villagers, few of them went to wait for employment at the Tangjiahe labor market.⁷²

⁷⁰ Mantetsu, Tenshin jimusho chosaka, *Investigation Materials Regarding Actual Conditions of Villages in Hebei Province*, 101.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 101.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 109.

As noted earlier, on average, per household or per person land holding in Eastern Hebei was a little higher than the provincial average. But the land was poorer and the productivity was lower. Use the same calculating format the Japanese investigators used in Shajing village, it can be seen that none of the 11 sample households in Houjiaying village could produced enough grain for their own consumption. All of them had to buy some grain to support their families (see Table 5-9). Thus, without the non-farming income form the outside world, it was impossible for these peasants to keep themselves from starvation.

Table 5-9, Grain production and consumption for the 11 sample households in Houjiaying, 1942 (grain unit: *shi*)

Household	Adult equivalent	Grain produced	Grain needed	Surplus or deficit
Hou Yongqin	7.60	15.40	22.80	-7.40
Hou Zhiping	7.10	3.27	21.30	-18.03
Kong Ziming	3.60	2.65	10.80	-8.15
Hou Zhenshan	7.40	3.40	22.20	-18.80
Hou Baoshan	3.00	3.00	9.00	-6.00
Yie Jinrui	13.90	7.95	41.70	-33.75
Hou Yongfeng	2.60	1.57	7.80	-6.23
Hou Yuanhui	3.60	1.65	10.80	-9.15
Hou Zhilong	8.30	4.74	24.90	-20.16
Liu He	1.80	1.71	5.40	-3.69
Liu Shukai	7.60	2.69	22.80	-20.11
Total	66.50	48.03	199.50	-151.47

Source: CN, *CN*, 5: 280-296.

Note: The total sample households were 13, I exclude two absentee landlords.

Compared with the Europeans who ventured all over the world in the eighteenth century and the Americans who settled the West of the United States in the nineteenth century, Chinese people were well known for their conservative psychology and Chinese peasants were often portrayed as bound to both earth and home.⁷³ It is true that in pre-liberation China, most Chinese peasants thought land was the only real property and farming was the main or proper occupation, but either attracted by the non-farming opportunity or forced by the deterioration of land-man ratio, since the late nineteenth century, more and more peasants left their villages and found work in the outside world. This tendency is obvious in Eastern Hebei. The decline of rural industry and decrease of outside working opportunities contributed to the hardship of peasant economy in the 1930s, this will be discussed in next chapter.

⁷³ Walter H. Mallory pointed out that "the adventurous spirit that settled the western part of North America is entirely lacking in China. . . . the great factor against Chinese emigration is that innate conservatism of the race coupled with a lack of proper governmental encouragement and support." Mallory, *China: Land of Famine* (New York: American Geographical Society, 1928), 119.

CHAPTER 6. IT IS HARDER TO MAKE A LIVING:
STATE INVOLUTION, IMPERIALISM AND PEASANTS' LIVELIHOOD
IN THE 1930S

The former chapters have described how the peasants of Eastern Hebei made a living by engaging in agriculture, industry, commerce, or some combination of all these industries. This chapter will focus on the changes in peasant life during the 1930s and answer the following questions: was it easier or harder to make a living for the peasant in the 1930s? If it was harder than before, what were the causes? To answer these questions, an analysis of the peasant's obligations to the state (the taxes and levies) must be undertaken.

State involution and increasing taxation

Compared with what the peasant had to pay in the later years, the tax burden in the nineteenth century in Eastern Hebei was not heavy. There were two kinds of burdens, one was the land tax (*tianfu*), the other was the levy (*laoyi* or *bingcai*). The former was collected from the land owners, those who rented land were excepted. The latter was levied on the whole community (village) on special occasions, such as the emperor visiting the Eastern Tombs (in Zunhua county) and imperial troops passing through this area. The rate of land tax varied according to the degrees of land fertility. The tax rate and the acres of taxed land were fixed with little change since the early

eighteenth century.¹ The government also levied a small tax or fee on land and house deeds, and on the licenses for marketing brokers. But as Li Ling and Feng Huade pointed out, in the nineteenth century, the deed tax was only a registration fee with the purpose to protect people's ownership of the properties, the tax on the licenses for the brokers was meant to limit the number of brokers to protect the merchants.² Table 6-1 shows the land taxes in Sanhe county.

Table 6-1, Land taxes in Sanhe county in 1935

Land description	Taxed land (mu)	Land tax (sil. tael)	Tax rate (tael/mu)
Private land	638,691	15,131	0.023690462
Bannerland	193,436	14,802	0.076521433
Governmental land	14,670	553	0.037695978

Source: *Sanhe xianzhi* (Sanhe Gazetteer) (1935), vol. 5.

As we have little information about the peasant's production in the nineteenth century, it is difficult to get a percentage which was paid to the government as taxes, but the available materials clearly show that the peasant's burden from all kinds of taxes increased in the later years. This increase of taxation began around 1900 and was accompanied with the procession of the so-called "state building" which Prasenjit

¹ "In 1712 the official rates for the most important imperial revenue, the land tax, were fixed in perpetuity by the K'ang-xi emperor; the provincial quotas due to Peking were to be raised only as new land was opened to cultivation and added to the tax rolls, increments which the provinces rarely recorded in their reports to the capital." Albert Feuerwerker, "Economic Trends in the Late Ch'ing Empire, 1870-1911," in John K. Fairbank and Kwang-ching Liu, ed., *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 11: *Late Ch'ing, 1800-1911*, Part 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 60.

² Li Ling, "A research on the deed tax in Hebei Province;" Feng Huade, "The evolution of the brokerage tax in Hebei Province;" See Fang Xianting, ed., *Zhongguo jingji yanjiu* (Studies of the Chinese Economy) (Changsha: Shangwu, 1938), 1081-1094; 1067-1080.

Duara characterized as a procession of “state involution.”³ There were two main ways to increase the taxation. One was surcharges on the normal taxes, the other was “periodical levies” (*tankuan*). According to Feng Huade’s study, the tax increase originated directly from the payment of the Boxer Indemnity. He observed that “after the Boxer Rebellion [in 1900], to pay the indemnity and to finance all kinds of aftermath works, the expenditure increased dramatically and the budget was in crisis. The government had to open new revenues.”⁴ The new revenues included surcharges on old taxes and legalization of the new taxes.

In the Qing Dynasty, there was no distinction between central and local revenues. Except the small part used to pay the administrative expenses at the county level, all tax incomes in the county were transmitted to the central government through the provincial treasurer. Beginning in the Republic period (after 1912), both provincial and county governments developed their own revenues and competed with the central government to hold on to the tax income (mainly the land tax) for its own use. No matter who controlled or used the incomes, all taxes were paid by the peasants and small merchants. Table 6-2 shows the growth of real revenue incomes and expenditures of Hebei Province in the Republic period.

As Prasenjit Duara noted, the most striking feature about Table 6-2 is the timing of the increases in provincial revenues. There is a clear cascading pattern that occurs

³ Prasenjit Duara, *Culture, Power, and the State: Rural North China, 1900-1942* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), chapter 3.

⁴ Fang Xianting ed., *Studies of the Chinese Economy*, 1069.

Table 6-2, Real incomes and expenditures of Hebei Province and
yearly percentage change, 1913-1934 (unit: yuan)

Year	Real income	Percentage change	Real expenditure	Percentage change
1913	1,625,484		8,255,433	
1914	5,776,648	255%	3,220,212	-60%
1916	2,644,561	-54	2,131,015	-34
1919	10,899,222	312	19,438,756	343
1925	9,603,207	-12	11,267,475	19
1931	31,131,782	224	31,132,598	176
1932	20,576,769	-34	20,576,769	-34
1933	25,517,821	24	25,517,821	24
1934	16,056,000	-37	15,735,023	-38

Source: Zhang Yifan, "An investigation of local finances in Hebei province," *Fuxing Yuekan* 4.4. Cited from Duara, *Culture, Power, and the State*, 69, Table 1.

Note: All real values in the table have been converted from nominal figures by utilizing an index of purchasing power for North China, compiled by a Nankai University team, based on wholesale prices in Tianjin.

over three distinct periods in the province corresponding to three different political regimes in Republic China: the early Republic under Yuan Shikai (represented by the years 1913, 1914, and 1916); the warlord period (1919 and 1925); and the period of Nationalist rule (the remaining years). Within this configuration, it becomes particularly clear that although there was a rather slow rate of growth in provincial income with periodic declines within each period, there were rather startling increases in provincial income from one period to the next.⁵ This means from Yuan Shikai to the Nationalist government, the peasants' burden was not lowered but increased.

⁵ Duara, *Culture, Power, and the State*, 67.

How did the provincial government increase its revenues? Table 6-3 shows that from 1916 to 1934, the land revenue (land tax) did not increase but decreased in Hebei Province in real value. But other revenues increased several times in the same period. The “other revenues” included deed taxes, brokerage taxes and excise taxes.

Table 6-3, Real income of Hebei Province and yearly percentage
1916-1934 (unit: yuan)

Year	Land revenue	Change	Other revenue	Change	Total income	Change
1916	8,181,696		2,644,561		10,826,257	
1919	7,165,412	-12%	3,733,810	41%	10,899,222	0.60%
1925	5,971,422	-16	3,631,785	-3	9,603,207	-12
1931	3,971,440	-33	27,160,342	648	31,131,782	224
1932	5,632,143	42	14,944,626	-45	20,576,769	-34
1933	6,306,931	12	19,210,890	28	25,517,821	24
1934	5,446,864	-13	10,609,136	-45	16,056,000	-37

Source: Duara, *Culture, Power, and the State*, 69, Table 2.

At first glance, the provincial government did not increase the land tax rate, but in fact the peasants' burden was doubled or tripled because they had to pay higher taxes on land bought or sold, on marketing the products or paying higher prices for non-agricultural products as the government levied higher taxes on the merchants and the merchants transferred part of the taxes to the buyers (peasants).

Compared with the provincial revenue, almost all county incomes were new taxes put on the peasants—surcharges and periodic levies (*mujuan* and *tankuan*). The tax names were not new, before 1900, the peasants had already paid a surcharge on the

land tax called a “melting fee” and paid a crop watching fee according to the mu of land. But the amount was small and the later was paid to the village for community use. In the Republic period, especially in the 1920s and 1930s, the surcharges and the levies were collected by the county government and became new taxes. Table 6-4 shows that about 80 percent of the income of Qinghai county (located outside but near Eastern Hebei) came from surcharges and *mujuan*. In fact, only the income from “county property” might be old income which existed before 1900.

Table 6-4, Distribution of income sources in Qinghai county, 1928-1933

Year	Land tax surcharge	Deed tax surcharge	County property	<i>Mujuan</i> (<i>periodic levies</i>)	Brokerage tax surcharge	Total
1928	57%	12%	15%		5%	89%
1929	30	7	8	47%	3	95
1930	31	14	7	40	4	96
1932	45	19	14	3	9	90
1933	36	17	11	17	9	90
1934	39	11	7	30	5	92

Source: Feng Huada, “The financial foundation of county administration,” cited from Duara, *Culture, Power, and the State*, 80, Table 4.

Note: The remaining 4 to 11 percent is made up of a multitude miscellaneous duties.

Tax increases are not necessarily bad for the peasants if the taxes are used for the benefit of the tax payers. Unfortunately for Eastern Hebei peasants, little of the taxes paid to all governmental agencies directly benefited the peasants, most were wasted as wages to governmental employees (including hired policemen and self-

defense forces). Once again, Qinghai county will be used as an example to show the distribution of expenditures in the county level.

Table 6-5 shows that about 50 percent of the total expenditure was used to maintain the police and security forces which did not exist before 1900. Another important expenditure was education which might benefit of peasants but the education percentage was decreasing during this period. From the warlord era to the Nationalist government era, the expenditure for modernization projects (such as road building) saw little change, except for two years, the expenditures were below 10 percent of the total expenditure. As most of the county revenue went to pay wages and there was little left over to provide for projects, the system of local finances ended up as a system supporting the livelihood of an increasing number of state employees. The local government became an “employment contraption.” Feng Huade, a specialist on local government and its finances in the 1930s, summed up the situation succinctly: “This disproportional distribution of expenditures [on salaries], especially for such items as industrial development (such as water control), which by its very nature requires greater outlays on equipment than on salaries, results in the creation of a nominal staff whose function is actually not to function. Under such circumstances, money spent is equivalent to money wasted, although the burden on the peasant is not in the least alleviated.”⁶

⁶ Feng Huade, “An analysis of county expenditure in Hebei Province,” Cited from Duara, *Culture, Power, and the State*, 83.

Table 6-5, Distribution of expenditure in Qinghai county, 1919-1933

Function	1919-23	1924-28	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933
Education	41%	43%	48%	24%	22%	38%	31%	22%
Police	49	37	49	27	19	33	21	24
Security				47	40	3	17	30
Modernization projects	7	3	2	2	10	18	13	8
Ward government		12			9	8	15	16
Other	2	4				1	3	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Feng Huade, "The financial foundation of county administration," cited from Duara, *Culture, Power, and the State*, 82, Table 6.

Note: 1919-23 and 1924-28 were annual average.

The provincial and county taxes were not the only burden the peasants had to bear. As the state tried to reach into the villages and enlarge its revenue income, the former sub-county informal administrative organizations (such as *Li* or *Bao* in the Qing Dynasty) were bureaucratized and more and more "state brokers" (Duara's terminology, such as tax collectors) were employed. These state brokers were not paid by the government revenue, they lived on "surcharges" from the tax payers. In Eastern Hebei, as in other parts of the province, almost all taxes were contracted to the tax-farmers. These tax farmers charged a fee on what they collected. The peasants paid much more than what the government received.

For a long time, the north China villages developed un-official organizations to supervise village wide activities, such as watching and protecting the crops grown on the fields, maintaining the village temples and renting temple lands, and giving plays to

honor the gods and entertain the villagers. These organizations raised the money needed for their activities by assessing the village families, often according to the amount of land they owned or operated. The money was called “green crop money” (*qingmiaotian* or *mujuan*). Before 1900, this “village tax” was very small and almost all was used directly for the villagers. But after 1900, under the government demand or pressure, the village had to develop its budget and the village tax became a heavy burden to the peasants, especially in times of war. Perhaps more unbearable for the peasants was that the expenditures of these taxes were not related with their benefits. Table 6-6 and Table 6-7 show the village income and expenditures in Xiaoying, Pinggu county and Lujiazhai, Zunhua county.

According to the investigation, Xiaoying had about 3,169 mu of land. As the total *mujuan* was 1,000 yuan, the *mujuan* rate was about 0.31 yuan per mu. At the same time, the peasants paid land tax (including surcharge) and levies to the county government, the rate was about 0.36 yuan per mu. The total state taxes and village fees per mu in Xiaoying was 0.67 yuan.⁷ In Lujiazhai, among the total 726.14 yuan expenditure, 511.33 yuan, or 70 percent, was paid for self-defending public safety (defense corps and police), only 168.42 yuan, or 23 percent, was used directly or indirectly in the village for peasants’ benefit, such as for village meeting, road and dyke repairing, crop watching and entertainment. In the total village income, *mujuan* was

⁷ Mantetsu, *Report on Xiaoying*, 23.

Table 6-6, Village income and expenditure in Xiaoying, Miyun county, 1934-35

Income source or expenditure description	Amount (yuan)	Percentage
Income		
Rent form public land	168	14%
<i>Mujuan</i>	1,000	86
Total	1,168	100
Expenditure		
Village school	280	25
Village defense	246.64	22
village administration	167	15
Road and bridge repairing	50	5
Sacrificing to the gods and entertainment	40	4
Interest paid for borrowed money	90	8
Others	228.20	21
Total	1,101.84	100

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on Xiaoying*, 21-22.

Table 6-7, Village expenditure in Lujiazhai, Zunhua county, 1934-35

Description	Amount (yuan)	Percentage
Village meeting	20.74	3%
Paid to the defense corps	132.77	32
Paid to the headquarters of defense corps	230.56	32
Road and dike repairing	77.50	11
Crop watching and night patrol	31.74	4
Entertainment	38.44	5
Telephone fee	22.90	3
Police fee	49.00	7
Others	23.49	3
Total	726.14	100

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on Lujiazhai*, 57.

768.89 yuan, as the village had only 1,708.6 mu land, the *mujuan* rate was 0.45 yuan per mu. It was about six times the land tax (not including the surcharges) paid to the state. What did this 0.45 yuan mean to the peasants? According to the same investigation, in the 1930s, the harvest per mu (including the stalks) was valued about 4.62 yuan, that means about 10 percent of the income from the land was paid as the village fees.⁸

Besides the state tax and village fees, the villagers had to pay taxes when marketing their products. Yi Fuqing, a gentleman-farmer in Lujiazai, complained to the investigators that taxation was one of the main reasons which caused the village economic difficulties. Among the marketing taxes, the most important ones were taxes on domestic animals, grains and timbers. According to the regulations, the tax rate for animal selling was 6 percent of the selling price. As pigs were bought and sold at least two times before being butchered (bought as a piglet and sold as a fat pig), the peasants had to pay more than once for the pigs. When the pigs were butchered, there were butchering taxes and other fees. Yi Fuqing cynically noted that when raising and selling pigs only the waste of the pigs was tax-free.⁹

Heavy taxes aroused the peasants' resistance. It was one of the important causes for the so-called "Xianghe Incident" or "Xianghe Rebellion." A journalist sent to investigate the incident provided a detailed report:¹⁰

⁸ Mantetsu, *Report on Lujiazhai*, 56, 65, 57.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 201.

¹⁰ The investigation was made by a journalist sent by *Ta Kong Pao*. The report was published on *Ta Kong Pao*, 27 October 1935.

In Xianghe county, the levy (not including the land tax) rate was 0.051 yuan per mu, the income was used for education, policing and construction. If there were other needs, the county would have emergency levies. In 1935, the county government decided to simplify the levying procedure and increase the levy rate to 0.171 yuan (the former 0.051 yuan plus another 0.120 yuan). They submitted their levy increasing proposal to the provincial government and got its approval. On August 13, 1935, the magistrate, Zhao Zhongpu, announced the levy increase decision which was posted on the street. The post declared that from the second tax collecting season of 1935 on, each taxed mu should pay another 0.12 yuan to pay the ward public security forces, local defense forces, provincial and county telephone communications, and other facilities. Plus the former surcharge of 0.051 yuan per mu, the total surcharge would be 0.171 yuan per mu. Other permanent levies should be canceled, but a special levy could be issued if there was an emergency.

Hearing the news of the levy increase, some local leaders began to urge the peasants to resist. They argued that the government had already levied a surcharge of 0.051 yuan per mu. Now, they were levying another 0.12 yuan, plus the formal land tax, the total tax on each mu would be more than 0.3 yuan. It was too much for the peasant to bear. The leaders urged the peasants to go to the county seat to protest on October 20 and demand the magistrate to denounce the new levy. On the appointed day, more than 2,000 peasants from all villages assembled. The result was the blood violence (one death, two wounded) and the fleeing of the magistrate. The rebellious

peasants occupied the county seat and declared the establishment of self-government. This might set the precedent for the so-called Eastern Hebei Autonomous Federation government.¹¹

Was the new levy really too heavy for the peasants to bear? The magistrate argued that it was not too heavy because the sum of the land tax and surcharge did not surpass the 1 percent of average land price (the average land price in Xianghe was 30 yuan per mu). But compared with the old levy rate (0.051 yuan per mu), the new levy rate (0.171 yuan per mu) tripled the old one. The magistrate still kept the right to have special levies “if there was a emergency.” Undoubtedly, the sudden and dramatic increase of taxation on the land was unbearable for the peasant.

Civil war, banditry and peasant losses

The overthrow of Qing Dynasty and establishment of the Republic brought only unrest to China. From 1920 on, the civil wars and Japanese invasions brought heavy taxes and losses to Eastern Hebei peasants. The most important wars during this period

¹¹ Under the “Tanggu Truce” regulation, the Chinese army could not enter the so-called “de-militarized zone.” So the Chinese government could not send troops to Xianghe to restore order there. It was also reported that two Japanese *ronin* participated in the demonstration and led the charge to break in the city gates. The Japanese involvement made the incident complicated. About this incident, *TIME* newsmagazine had the following report under the title of “New fangled Ronin:” “Last week the Chinese military commander of Hopei [Hebei] Province, General Shang Chen, charged that ‘modern Japanese ronin’ are sneaking about in his province stirring up Chinese farmers to revolt. Sure enough, embattled farmers rose last week, capturing Hsiangho [Xianghe] 40 mi. from Peiping, . . . When General Shang dispatched two companies of Chinese soldiers to quell the rebels, Japanese officials flew into a rage, thundered that the rebels were in the official ‘demilitarized zone’ set up after the Tangku Truce and therefore could not be touched by Chinese soldiers who must not enter it. Down sat the two companies of Chinese on the opposite bank of a canal from the demilitarized zone, within sound of the shooting rebels & ronin.” *TIME*, 4 November 1935, 28.

(1920-1937) included the Chili-Fengtian war (between the warlords), the northern expedition, and the resistance to the Japanese along the Great Wall. In pre-1949 China, when war broke out, the peasants of the area where troops passed or were stationed must supply draft animals, carts, forage and other services. These were called “war related levies and corvees” (*bingcai*). Once again, Lujiazhai village in Zunhua county will serve as an example. During the ten years from 1924 to 1933, war and banditry related losses are shown in Table 6-8. The losses were several times of the state taxes and village fees levied for the same years (about the village income and expenditure see Table 6-7 and the related explanation).

Table 6-8, War and banditry related losses in Lujiazhai, 1924-1933

Year	Losses (yuan)	Causes
1924	10,000	Chili-Fengtian war, drafted mules, carts and labores
1927	?	Mounted bandits robbery
1928	3,000	Chili-Chandong war, robbery
1933	6,000	Resistance Japanese war along the Great Wall

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on Lujiazhai*, 65.

Among those war related taxes and losses in Eastern Hebei, the heaviest one was that related with the resistance to the Japanese. In 1933, the Japanese invaded north China from Manchuria and Jehol, the Chinese troops resisted this invasion along the Great Wall. Eastern Hebei was declared as “war zone” or “war area” (*zhanqu*). As a large number troops moved through or were stationed in this zone, it bore heavy taxes and suffered great losses. In Ji county, the war related levies were 600,000 yuan that

year.¹² In Tong county, according to the Nationalist Party's investigation, the direct governmental drafts, such as carts, mules, firewood, fodder, quilts, bags, ropes and grain, equaled about 476,000 yuan. Besides this, the peasants' losses [due to the illegal draft in the forms of mules, carts, domestic-animals, grain, furniture, clothes, trees and tools] were estimated at about 805,000 yuan. The total damage was more than one million yuan. One researcher stated that the total losses in Eastern Hebei during the war in 1933 was near 100,000,000 yuan.¹³

The temporary armistice from 1934 to 1936 did not bring relief to the peasants. Under the Tanggu Truce signed by the Nationalist Government and the Japanese, Eastern Hebei had been marked as a "demilitarized zone." After the Chinese troops withdrew from this area, bandits rose everywhere, especially along the Great Wall. Some of these bandits were supported by the Japanese troops. To fight the bandits and to protect the community, self-defense corps were organized at the county, the ward and the village levels. In Zunhua county, provincial guard forces were stationed along the Great Wall, in addition, there was county defense corps, county security forces and police. The peasants had to bear the cost for all these forces.¹⁴ Heavy taxes aroused more tax-resistance and more peasants were forced to participate with the bandit group to rob others. The Japanese investigators found that in some parts of Zunhua county, it

¹² Mantetsu, *Report on the Investigation of General Conditions of the Sixteen Counties in Eastern Hebei*, 119.

¹³ Fang Xianting, ed., *Studies of the Chinese Economy*, 1095.

¹⁴ Mantetsu, *Report on the Investigation of General Conditions of the Sixteen Counties in Eastern Hebei*, 188.

was difficult to distinguish between law-abiding peasants and bandits.

In Funing county, the bandits even occupied the county seat for about two months, robbing most merchants and rich families.¹⁵ In Luan county, there were about seventeen gangs of bandits and more than one thousand armed bandits.¹⁶ The direct cause of the increasing banditry was the effort to resist the Japanese invasion. While the fighting occurred along the Great Wall, Chinese troops stationed in or moving through Luan county (to Xifengkou) had already caused much trouble to the peasants, the estimated loss was about 17,000,000 yuan. After signing the Tanggu Truce, the Chinese troops withdrew from Eastern Hebei, but the dismissed soldiers joined with local bullies and others to organize the so-called “self-defense corps.” They forced the peasants to pay protection fees to them. In early summer of 1933, seventeen gangs controlled three to four hundred villages. Besides causing the spread of banditry indirectly by the invasion, some Japanese instigated or supported the banditry directly. As early as 1930, it was reported that Japanese *ronin* supplied arms to Bai Long, a notorious bandit looting along the Great Wall. The arms and munitions were brought in from Qinghuangdao, Beidaihe and Shanhaiguan and transported to the bandits through land road by the Japanese disguised as merchants.¹⁷ After the Chinese troops withdrew, Japanese troops and their vanguards—the Japanese and Korean merchants and drug

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 318.

¹⁶ About the banditry in Luan County, see Zhang Jinchun, *Luanxian jiaofei jilue* (Record of Suppressing the Bandits in Luan County).

¹⁷ *Ta Kong Pao*, 12 December 1930, p. 4.

dealers—moved into Eastern Hebei. In Luan county, when a Chinese drug dealer was arrested, the head of the Association of Japanese Sojourners went to the county seat and demanded the magistrate to free the drug dealer. After this unreasonable demand had been declined, the Japanese troops quartered at the railway station threatened the magistrate by force. The Japanese troops also blocked the railway cars which carried the provincial security forces who were sent to suppress the bandits that occupied the Funing county seat.¹⁸ As noted earlier, in Xianghe county, Japanese *ronin* participated in an attack on the county seat.¹⁹

The money and material losses were not the only damage caused by the war and the banditry. The loss of labor animals delayed planting and the loss of pigs caused fertilizer shortages. Some people simply abandoned their lands and houses to flee to the big cities, such as Beijing and Tianjin. Wang Yaowu, a native of Zunhua county, noted that “my hometown is located near the Great Wall. My family had several thatched cottages and 50 mu of poor land. The income is not great but enough to keep my family from starvation. For decades, I worked outside the village [as soldier, policeman and journalist] and did not worry about their survival. But suddenly, the Japanese invaded into the Great Wall and the hometown became unsafe. My family had to leave the home village and come to Beiping to live with me.” He wrote in a poem entitled “My family came to Beiping as refugees:” “My home village backs on the mountain and faces the river, the rural scenery is beautiful. But the war broke out,

¹⁸ Zhang Jinchun, *Record of Duplicating the Bandits in Luan County*, 22-23.

¹⁹ *Ta Kong Pao*, 27 October 1935.

[the enemy is coming] my family could not live there any longer. Do not want to leave the hens and dogs behind, they bring all of them with the tables and chairs to Beiping.”²⁰ Those who still lived in the villages were so poor even the bandits could not extort any more from them. In another poem titled “Talking with my hometown people,” Wang Yaowu recorded that “it is a great pleasure to meet hometown people, but talking about those who lived under the war, the sadness took over us. Fleeing from the invaders from the north but facing the bandits in the south, how difficult it is to live under the two sides attack! The people were so poor that the bandits only requested one hundred copper coins [less than one yuan] plus three packs of cigarettes for a hostage.” He noted at the end of the poem that after the Tanggu Truce in May, 1933, the central army withdrew and the bandits took over his hometown area. They set fire to the houses, killed and robbed the people every day. Under this situation, it was difficult for the people to make a living. Even such a “good news” about the low ransom made people cry for those poor peasants.²¹

The door is closed: The arrival of the Japanese

In the 1930s, the most important event which affected both Eastern Hebei’s economy and the peasants’ livelihood was not the resistance war and the banditry but the Manchurian Incident in 1931 and the establishment of Manchuguo in the next

²⁰ Wang Yaowu, *Ragged Verses*, (April 13, 1933).

²¹ *Ibid.*, (March 27, 1935).

year.²² The war and banditry only affected parts of Eastern Hebei temporarily, the establishment of Manchuguo and the high tariff wall set by the Japanese puppet government cut off Manchuria from China proper and closed this important market for Eastern Hebei products, such as native cloth woven in the Baodi area and paper manufactured in Qian-an county. Under the new regulations, fewer people could go to Manchuria in the 1930s, and those who already worked there had to return to their home villages.²³ The Manchurian Incident and the establishment of Manchuguo caused an economic crisis in Eastern Hebei.

In September, 1931, Japanese troops launched an attack on Mukden and occupied Manchuria in the following months. In early 1932, Japanese troops attacked Shanhaiguan and controlled the railway from Shanhaiguan to Mukden, which they renamed the “Feng-shan railway.” The railway communication between China proper and Manchuria was disconnected. Japanese troops did not stop at Shanhaiguan. In 1933, the Japanese and Manchuguo troops launched another attack on Jehol and moved towards the Great Wall. From Shanhaiguan, the Japanese reached as far as Tangshan,

²² About Manchurian Incident and the establishment of Manchuguo, see the reports on *TIME*, 28 September 1931, p. 22-23; 21 March 1932, p. 15.

²³ In March, 1935, the Headquarters of Japanese Troops in Manchuria (*guandongjun*) and the Manchuguo government both issued “the regulations banning the entrance of foreign laborers.” The main purpose was to restrict the Chinese but encourage Japanese and Koreans to emigrate to Manchuria. Zhang Youyi, ed., *Source Materials on Agricultural History*, 3:520. The effect of these changes was obvious in Leting county. According to the Japanese investigation, before the Manchuria Incident, more than 100 people from Baizhuang (124 households) went to Manchuria, but in 1936, only 20 to 30 people still worked there. In Damiaozhuang (60 households) and Matouying (400 households), before 1931, about 80 percent of the households had family members working in Manchuria, in 1936, only about half of the households still had family members worked there. See Mantetsu, *Report on the 25 Villages in Eastern Hebei*, 2: 227-228, 245.

the important industrial city in Eastern Hebei. After the Tanggu Truce of 1933, the Beining Railway was re-opened but was controlled by two different companies. After the establishment of Manchuguo, Manchuria (including Jehol) was cut off from China and the Great Wall became the new line between the two hostile states. Wang Yaowu, the popular poet, lamented in a poem titled “the so-called Great Wall line:” “The Great Wall became the new board line of the country, my family lived there for a long time; going to north several steps, you become a foreigner; there is no traveling cost for going and returning from abroad. The river and the mountain were divided into two parts and belonged to two countries [China and Manchuguo], just like a person whose arms and legs were cut off, I wonder when the body could be re-united.”²⁴

Beginning in 1933, Manchuguo established custom offices at Shanhaiguan and other important passes along the Great Wall, such as at Lengkou, Xifengkou and Gubeikou. They treated the products from China proper as foreign goods and levied a heavy duty. But on the other side, the Chinese Nationalist Government did not recognize the independence of Manchuguo and still treated the products imported from Manchuria as domestic goods. Only the overseas products (mainly Japanese goods) imported through the Great Wall passes were levied import duties plus 10 percent surcharges for the relief of natural disasters. The exported goods (from China proper to Manchuria) were duty free.²⁵ Under this situation, the importing business (from

²⁴ Wang Yaowu, *Ragged Verses*, (August 4, 1933).

²⁵ Mantetsu, Tenshin jimusho chosaka, *Kito kuiki no boeki gaikyo to kazei jijyo* (Report on the actual conditions of trade and tariff in Eastern Hebei), 86-87.

Manchuria to China proper) slackened and the exporting (from China proper to Manchuria) was almost stopped. Baodi cloth and Qian-an paper lost their main market and the production and exporting declined dramatically.

According to Fang Xianting's study, "the Manchuguo government, at the end of 1932, imposed a new tariff on Paoti [Baodi] cloth, with a rate of \$17.55 per bale of from 34 to 40 pieces, and in Kuan-cheng an additional stamp tax of \$4.00 per bale. This meant that each piece before it reached the consumer in the area controlled by that government was weighted with an extra cost of 52 cents. The old competitors had now become superseded by the Japanese weaver who was exempt from these taxes and was not slow to produce a good imitation of ta-ch'ih cloth which he hurries to place on the Manchurian market."²⁶ Table 6-9 shows the dramatic decline of Baodi cloth selling in Manchuria and Jehol.

Table 6-9. Volume of cloth sold in principal market areas for Baodi cloth,
1923 and 1933 (unit: piece)

Province	1923	1933	Percentage of decrease or increase
Jehol	3,302,693	706,610	-79%
Manchuria	680,000	20,400	-97
Northwest	246,000	792,000	+222
Hebei	360,000	90,000	-75
Total	4,588,693	1,609,000	-65

Source: Fong, *A Case Study of Baodi*, 54, Table 15.

Note: Northwest includes Suiyuan, Shanxi, Ningxia and Shenxi.

²⁶ Fong, *A Case Study of Baodi*, 62-63.

In 1934, Manchuguo established custom offices at Lengkou, Xifengkou, Cayazi and Baiyanglou to levy duties on imported Qian-an produced papers. The domestic tax before 1924 was 4.25 yuan per bale (for *hongcaozhi*, an imitation of Korean paper), the new duty rates were 5.1 yuan per bale in 1935 and 7.65 yuan in 1936.²⁷ The decline of exports to Manchuria is shown in table 6-10.

Table 6-10, Qian-an paper exported to Manchuria, 1931-35

Year	Amount (bale)	Value (yuan)
1931	42,000	1,410,000
1932	30,100	1,350,000
1933	24,800	788,000
1934	24,500	630,000
1935	17,500	480,000

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on Rural Industries*, 29.

While the Japanese invasion and the establishment of Manchuguo interrupted the normal trade between China proper and Manchuria, smuggling became prosperous in Eastern Hebei. This illegal business became a large scale operation by 1933.²⁸ Obviously, this was due to the loss of Chinese sovereignty in Eastern Hebei and the Japanese army's protection of the smugglers. But the Japanese investigators put the main cause on Chinese Nationalist Government's increase of the rate of importing

²⁷ Mantetsu, *Report on Rural Industries*, 29.

²⁸ The Japanese smuggling not only hurt the Chinese domestic market, but also threatened the international trade between China and other countries. This led to the British protest to Japan. *TIME*, 11 May 1936, 25-26.

duties.²⁹ After the Tanggu Truce and the withdrawal of Chinese troops and armed custom patrol forces from Eastern Hebei, Japanese and Koreans smuggled Japanese made artificial silk floss and yarn, sugar, cigarette papers and other products into north China. They first transported these products from Dalian or Korea to Wanjiatun, a small station along the former Beining Railway in the Manchuria side. From there the smugglers hired Chinese laborers to carry the products to China, they crossed the Great Wall at Shanhaiguan and transported the goods to Tianjin and other places by railway again. A Japanese investigator (Takami Nobuo) who visited Shanhaiguan recorded what he saw and heard there.

The artificial silk floss and yarn, cigarettes paper and other miscellaneous goods unloaded at Wanjiatun railway station were first transported to Dongluocheng, a small village near Shanhaiguan in Manchuria side. There, the big bales were opened and the artificial silk was repacked for the Chinese coolies, there were about 2,000 coolies waiting there. Each coolie took 30 to 40 pieces and 50, 100 even 200 coolies were organized into one gang, and 10 to 20 Japanese or Koreans took sticks to supervise [the coolies]. In the afternoon, the smuggling gangs started off one after another, the marches are magnificent. They crossed the Great Wall at *Dongshuimen* (east water gate), *Nanshuimen* (south water gate), or *hai-an* (sea coast) and entered Eastern Hebei. If they were stopped by Chinese custom inspectors [in China proper side], the Koreans and Japanese who took sticks [they were called "violence corps"] would fight their way out and led the smuggling gangs forward. Reaching Qinhuangdao, the artificial silks were put into big gunny sacks (each contained about 120 pieces) again. The Koreans and Japanese took these sacks on the railway cars and sold them in Tianjin. There were four schedules from Qinhuangdao to Jianjin each day.³⁰

Besides smuggling by crossing the Great Wall, the Japanese also smuggled through sea routes. They called it the "secret trade" or "junk trade." The small steam boats and junks took Japanese products from Dalian or Lushun and landed on the coast

²⁹ Mantetsu, Tenshin jimusho chosaka, *Kito kuiki tokusyu boki no jijyo* (Report on the Actual Conditions of the "Special Trade" in Eastern Hebei), 2-5.

³⁰ Mantetsu, *Report on the Actual Conditions of Trade and Tariff in Eastern Hebei*, 97-98.

of Eastern Hebei. As Chinese custom armed inspecting boats were banned from cruising near the Eastern Hebei coast, the junk smuggling quickly increased. After the establishment of the Eastern Hebei Autonomous Federation for Joint Defense Against Communism at the end of 1935, this junk smuggling became open transportation. In February, 1936, the Eastern Hebei government legalized the smuggling and opened five custom inspection offices along the coast [at Qinhuangdao, Nandasi, Beidaihe, Liushouying and Changli respectively], but the duty was only a quarter of what the Nationalist Government normally levied. All directors and inspectors at the inspection offices were Japanese and the Japanese investigator admitted that the Japanese inspectors controlled the inspection offices.³¹ The Eastern Hebei government gave monopoly import rights to several Japanese companies and designated different ports for them to land. Among the smuggling firms, half of them were Japanese, Korean and Chinese composed 30 percent and 20 percent respectively. Many first class Japanese enterprises, such as Mitsui and Mitsubishi, participated in this notorious smuggling. To protect their reputation, the above two Japanese enterprises used pseudonyms in the business.³²

Besides artificial silks, the Japanese also smuggled sugar, cigarette papers and other products, even drugs, into Eastern Hebei. It is difficult to know how much Japanese products were smuggled into north China and how much silver coins were smuggled out as there are no statistics. One estimate said that the total value of

³¹ Mantetsu, *Report on the Actual Conditions of the "Special Trade" in Eastern Hebei*, 15.

³² *Ibid.*, 38.

Table 6-11, Values of goods smuggled in Eastern Hebei by sea route,
1933-34, (unit: yuan)

Year	Artificial silks	Sugar	Others	Total
1933	9,000,000	7,000,000	4,000,000	20,000,000
1934	6,000,000	7,200,000	2,000,000	15,200,000

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on the Actual Conditions of Trade and Tariff in Eastern Hebei*, 112.

smuggled goods before 1936 was 60-70 million yuan, or more than 100 million yuan.³³

Another estimate made by a certain organization which the Japanese investigator claimed to be more reliable gave the following figures (see Table 6-11).

Until the 1930s, silver coins were the main currency in rural China. As the paper money issued by different banks, especially by different warlords, devalued very fast, peasants still preferred to use silver coins for important transactions, such as in land and house buying and selling. Under the United States' silver purchasing policy, the world silver price rose dramatically after 1934. Adding to the problem, the Japanese smuggled silver out of Eastern Hebei. One estimate said that in the eight months from October, 1934 to August, 1935, no less than 30,000,000 silver coins (silver yuan) were smuggled out of China through Shanhaiguan.³⁴

Compared with artificial silk and other smuggled products, drug smuggling not only hurt the economy but also the health of the people. In the early 1920s, both the Custom Officials at Tianjin and Qinhuangdao noted that Manchuria was the main

³³ Mantetsu, *Report on the Actual Conditions of Trade and Tariff in Eastern Hebei*, 112.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 113.

opium producer and Japanese were the main cocaine supplier. The Tianjin Custom Office reported that “opium is smuggled via the Peking-Moukden Railway [the Beining Railway] from Manchuria, where it has been grown during the last four or five years, while morphia and cocaine arrive from Japan in ever-increasing quantities.”³⁵

Qinhuangdao Customs confirmed that “there runs parallel with the traffic of opium that of morphia, which has a particularly strong hold on the lower-class Chinese. The ease with which this drug is handled and the simplicity of the instrument employed in its injection invite many persons to fall victim to its use. The source of supply is traced to Dairen [Dalian, in South Manchuria which was controlled by Japan at that time] through Shanhaikuan [Shanhaiguan]. The principal dealers are Japanese, who are found disguised as ordinary druggists or photographers in nearly every town.”³⁶ In 1930, a Chinese reporter found that in Tangshan city, there were many drug-users [*baimianke*]. The head of the public security bureau hated the drug dealings but he could not destroy it because most of the drug dealers were Japanese and punishing them might cause international dispute.³⁷

The Japanese investigators estimated that Jehol produced about 14,000,000 ounces of opium each year, the total value was about 17,800,000 yuan. Among the total product, about 3,000,000 ounces, or 21 percent, were smuggled into Eastern Hebei.³⁸ When Eastern Hebei Anti-communist Government legalized the smuggling business,

³⁵ C.I.M.C., *Decennial Reports, 1912-21*, 145.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 120.

³⁷ *Ta Kong Pao*, 2 December 1930, p. 4.

³⁸ Mantetsu, *Report on the Actual Conditions of Trade and Tariff in Eastern Hebei*, 115.

drug importing was also legalized. The new regulation stated those who imported opium, morphine, cocaine and other drugs or similar products should have certificates provided by doctors, pharmacists or chemical business related merchants.³⁹ It is easy to find that most of the so-called doctors, pharmacists and chemical-specialists were Japanese or Korean drug dealers. Drug dealing not only drew precious silver coins out of Eastern Hebei but also created new bandits. A Chinese journalist who visited Eastern Hebei in October, 1933, reported that “banditry in *Luandong* area (including Luan, Leting, Changli, Funing and Linyu) is the cause of disaster at present, but it could be suppressed. The most difficult problem to deal with is not the banditry but the Chinese traitors. In Changli county, there are traitors everywhere. It is difficult to suppress them because they have the protection from the Japanese. The headquarters of these bandits and traitors were the drug-houses (*baimianguan*) opened by the Japanese. There are 40 to 50 such drug-houses selling opium, heroin and other drugs. They also opened pawn shops which charged high interest to exploit the local people. Besides all the above evil deeds, the drug house is a front organization to recruit bandits. Those who are addicted to drugs always participated in the gangs and openly robbed and received the protection from the Japanese.”⁴⁰ According to the Japanese information, there were 147 Japanese and Korean in Changli county, among them 74 engaged in

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴⁰ Wei Hongyun, ed., *Investigation and Research on Eastern Hebei Village*, 25.

opium and heroin dealing, 48 managed gambling and drug houses, another 12 ran pawn shops which sold opium at the same time.⁴¹

War, banditry, high tariffs and the disconnection of the Beining Railway obstructed the communication between China proper and Manchuria. From the railway company's statistics it is clear that fewer people traveled and fewer commodities were transported in 1933 because the communication links at Shanhaiguan were totally blocked. Table 6-12 shows the changes of passenger numbers and the freight tonnage in three years. The railway investigators reported clearly that the main reason for the decline of passenger numbers in 1933 was that after the Manchuria Incident, fewer merchants in Changli, Leting and Funing went to Manchuria because they worried about the social unrest in and outside of Shanhaiguan.⁴²

Table 6-12, Passenger numbers and freight tonnage in Shanhaiguan section, Beining Railway, 1932-1934

Year	Passenger number	Freight tonnage
1932	749,547	268,332.87
1933	542,726	96,410.12
1934	810,750	172,338.91

Source: *Report of the Beining Railway Economic Survey Team*, 1700.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁴² *Report of the Beining Railway Economic Survey Team*, 1700.

The loss of outside working opportunities and market made it harder for the Eastern Hebei peasants to make a living. One observer described the hardship brought by these changes in Yutian county:

Just as in other districts of China, most land in Yutian county was held by the landlords. . . . About half of the peasants had not enough land to support their families and they often lived at the edge of starvation. But it has been in recent years that the situation became more serious and pressing. In the former years, these peasants who had little land and lived under the threat of starvation had three choices to supplement their incomes. First, they could become industrial workers. The opening of Kailuan Coal Mines, Chin Hsin Cement Factory, Hua Hsin Cotton Mill and the Beining Railroad could absorb a large number of rural surplus laborers. The second choice was “going to Manchuria.” They could go as far as Taonan, Kuanchengzi, Chuanchang and Harbin to open land or work as laborers. They stayed there three to five years and did not return home during this period, it was a safe way to keep one from starvation. If the peasants did not like to go so far away, they could take the third choice—“going beyond the passes [on the Great Wall] (*paokouwai*).” They could go to Kailu area in Jehol province to open land or pool money together to buy camels to transport in and out the Great Wall. They sold reed mats and handicraft made cloth beyond the Wall and made a living as merchants. [As all peasants could make a living at that time], it was a comparatively peaceful and prosperous period: there were no armed bandits, or even thieves. But, the good time had gone and the prosperity became memories. The Beining Railway, Chin Hsin Cement Factory, Kailuan Coal Mines and other industries are in depression, they recruit no new workers but lay off many employees. Even if they employ several new ones to fill the jobs left by the retired ones, [the pay is less and] the living conditions [for the new workers] are lower than before. The road of “going to Manchuria” was closed by the Manchuguo government, the regulations of banning entrance of Chinese laborers declared the door was closed. Going beyond the passes is also as restricted as going to Manchuria, and Jehol always have war there. It is not worth to enter a fighting area and die there. To make the situation worse, the native products [handicraft made cloth] could not compete with the machine made Japanese goods and the peasant-merchants could not compete with the organized “Japanese goods marketing company.” Thus, all three supplementary occupations were cut off [and it is harder for the peasants to make a living].⁴³

World economic depression and Eastern Hebei economy

David Faure and Loren Brandt argued that commercialization and international trade brought benefits to Chinese peasants and improved their livelihood,

⁴³ Zhi Ming, “Yutian villages under the Eastern Hebei Autonomous Federation,” (written in 1937). Zhang Youyi, *Source Materials on Agricultural History*, 3: 520.

but we should not neglect the negative impact brought by commercialization and international trade in some periods, especially during the world economic depression. The economy of Eastern Hebei experienced a crisis in the early 1930s due to the depression, the Japanese invasion and the loss of outside working opportunities and market. Both Chinese and Japanese investigators' descriptions about the economic situation provide some information about this crisis.

In Miyun county, the Beining Economic Survey Team observed in 1935, that “under the present situation, the bankruptcy of the rural economy is the general trend. The livelihood of the peasant is going from bad to worse.”⁴⁴ An important indication of economic depression was the trade decline at Gubeikou, a trading post between Eastern Hebei and Jehol located in Miyun county. The Chinese investigators reported that “after the Jehol Incident (when Japanese and Manchuguo troops invaded Jehol and fought with Chinese troops along the Great Wall in 1933), Japanese opened many businesses [at Gubeikou], such as wine-shops, restaurants and department stores to sell foreign goods, they were ambitious and worked very hard. On the other hand, the Chinese enterprises [in the town] made little progress. Because of the high tariff and other regulations, such as banning the export of silver coins, the outside market was almost lost. On the inside market, as it was too far away to the main markets and the transportation fees were high, there were fewer buyers and the business declined. There were three restrictions on business: First, the custom duty which was 30 percent of the

⁴⁴ *Report of the Beining Railway Economic Survey Team*, 416.

commodity value, but sometimes it was increased to 50 percent. For example, the duty on one hundred *jin* of plain native cloth was 14.65 yuan, on one hundred *jin* of dyed cloth it was 16 yuan. On average, the duty for one piece cloth (4 *jin*, price is 2 yuan) was more than 0.6 yuan. Second, the high cost of remitting. If merchants wanted to send money from outside the Great Wall to other places inside the Wall, the fee for one hundred yuan is 40 yuan. Third, the policy of banning silver exporting. If the merchants bring less than 50 silver coins from Jehol into the Great Wall, the silver dollars would be changed into Manchuguo paper money. If a merchant tries to transport more than 50 silver coins, the silver coins would be confiscated.⁴⁵

For Ji county, the report said that “after the Jehol Incident in 1933, the losses were heavy. To make the situation worse, natural and human made disasters made the agricultural harvests poor for the consecutive years. People’s livelihood was very hard.” One indication of agricultural crisis was the decline of land price. “Five or six years ago (before 1930), the price for one mu of land was 80 to 90 yuan. Now, it is only worth about 30 yuan. On the other side, the taxes and levies [on the land] have been increased, the labor wage is higher but the grain price is lower. The income from the harvest is not enough to pay the cost. As there was little or no return from farming, fewer and fewer people want to farm the land and this made the land price lower and lower.”⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Ibid., 435-436.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 1144, 1148.

In Fengrun county, the investigators found the same thing as they did in Ji county. “In recent years, the rural economy is in depression. The land price is declining. On average, the price for the first grade land is about 10 yuan lower”⁴⁷ In Luan county, they also found that “in recent years, as the levy for local defense and police use on each mu of land is as high as 1.5 yuan or more—the regular land tax and surcharge were not included, the cost was so high that at the end of a year’s hard work, there was little left for consuming. The peasant’s livelihood is harder and harder. On average, the living cost is only 0.1 yuan per day. Even for the rich peasants, they could only have dress made of native cloth and eat sorghum and other coarse grain.”⁴⁸

The Japanese investigators drew similar conclusions. They reported that rural bankruptcy was not an isolated phenomenon in one village or in a specific year. It was the result of general and lasting poverty.⁴⁹ They recorded that the peasant’s livelihood in Pinggu county could be described in two Chinese characters—*beican*—that means miserable or tragic. They listed three causes for rural economic depression: poor soil, the price scissors between agricultural and industrial products, and tariff wall set up by Manchuguo. The peasants were so poor and desperate that they lost hope for the future and became insensitive to the changing outside world. For them, the transition from the Qing Dynasty to Republic and to Eastern Hebei Anti-communist Government had little meaning. They did not care who took the power and had no confidence in nor

⁴⁷ Ibid., 1359.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 1429.

⁴⁹ Mantetsu, *Report on the Investigation of General Conditions of the Sixteen Counties in Eastern Hebei*, 102.

expectation from the government. They just prayed to the Gods for rain and a good harvest.⁵⁰

In Ji county, the peasants told the Japanese investigators that compared with the conditions of ten years ago, the situation became worse. One reason for this was the decline of grain prices and decrease of production because flood, plague of insects, hail and drought.⁵¹ The *Ji Gazetteer*, compiled in the early 1940s, kept a record of the prices for grains, manufactured goods, and labor wages. This is the only complete price record for the early decades of the twentieth century. Here, wheat, maize, sorghum, cloth (*daji*) and year-laborer wage will be used to show the price changes in the Republic period (see Table 6-13).

From Table 6-13 we find that in the 1910s and the 1920s, the prices for grains, cloth, and year-laborer had little change. From 1930 on, the prices rose first and then dropped. As most peasants sold more than they brought in, so the rise and fall of grain prices were more important to them than other price changes. For the grain prices, 1917, 1924 and 1931 represented the high prices, 1928 and 1934 recorded the lowest prices. The Japanese investigators revealed a somewhat different numbers. According to the Japanese investigation, the grain prices were high around 1928 and low around 1933 in Ji county (see Table 6-14).

⁵⁰ Ibid., 78-80.

⁵¹ Ibid., 132-133.

Table 6-13, Prices for grains, cloth and year-laborer in Ji county, 1912-1937
(unit: yuan/dou for grains, yuan/piece for cloth, and yuan for year-laborer)

Year	Wheat	Maize	Sorghum	Cloth (<i>dingji</i>)	Year-laborer
1912	0.56	0.28	0.25	1.80	10
1913	0.53	0.28	0.23	1.80	9
1914	0.48	0.25	0.20	1.90	11
1915	0.45	0.23	0.21	2.00	9
1916	0.57	0.30	0.27	1.55	10
1917	0.79	0.47	0.44	2.30	12
1918	0.60	0.34	0.30	2.74	12
1919	0.65	0.37	0.37	2.81	12
1920	0.64	0.44	0.40	2.50	11
1921	0.67	0.48	0.41	2.45	11
1922	0.67	0.53	0.50	2.32	13
1923	0.67	0.52	0.48	2.58	11
1924	0.78	0.61	0.54	2.60	11
1925	0.66	0.51	0.43	3.00	10
1926	0.70	0.40	0.38	2.76	10
1927	0.70	0.40	0.38	2.80	10
1928	0.60	0.38	0.30	3.00	9
1929	0.70	0.40	0.35	3.00	14
1930	0.80	0.50	0.45	2.80	20
1931	1.10	0.70	0.66	3.00	30
1932	1.08	0.65	0.60	3.10	34
1933	0.10	0.60	0.59	2.85	40
1934	0.90	0.58	0.55	2.60	38
1935	0.90	0.66	0.65	2.50	38
1936	1.20	0.76	0.62	2.80	44
1937	1.50	0.84	0.79	3.30	60

Source: *Ji xianzhi* (Ji Gazetteer) (1944), vol. 13.

Note: The prices in copper coins are converted to yuan according to the change rate recorded in the same gazetteer.

Table 6-14, Grain prices in Ji county, 1928-1936 (unit: yuan/dou)

Year	Sorghum	Wheat	Millet	Maize
Around 1928	1.0	1.4	1.4	0.8-0.9
Around 1933	0.5-0.6	1.0	0.8	0.5-0.6
1936	0.8	1.3	1.3	0.8-0.9

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on the Investigation of General Conditions of the Sixteen Counties in Eastern Hebei*, 132.

The Japanese investigators had the same finding in Ninghe county. There, they found the highest price for grain was in 1927 and the lowest was in 1933 (see Table 6-15). Another Mantetsu researcher (Mitsuno Kaoru) who made a detailed investigation of the cotton growing Xiaojie village in Tong county, recorded the prices for agricultural products in the ten years from 1925 to 1935 (see Table 6-16). According to his findings, the prices were higher in the late 1920s than that in the early 1930s.

It is difficult to determine which record (the Chinese gazetteer or the Japanese investigation) is more reliable. But both records showed that around 1933 the grain

Table 6-15, Grain prices in Ninghe county, 1927 and 1933 (unit: yuan/shi?)

Grains	1927	1933	Price lowered
Sorghum (red)	13.0	4.0	-9.0
Sorghum (white)	15.0	7.8	-7.2
Millet	18.0	11.0	-7.0
Rice	26.0	16.0	-10.0
Wheat	15.0	8.0	-7.0

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on the Investigation of General Conditions of the Sixteen Counties in Eastern Hebei*, 216.

Table 6-16, Prices for agricultural products in Tong county, 1925-1935
(unit: yuan/dou for grains, yuan/100 jin for cotton)

Year	Maize	Millet	Sorghum	Wheat	Soybean	Cotton
1925	0.640	0.540	0.516	0.705	0.655	
1926	0.530	0.445	0.475	0.610	0.590	
1927	0.520	0.475	0.505	0.700	0.600	
1928	0.520	0.560	0.510	0.715	0.590	
1929	0.780	0.530	0.660	0.785	0.735	16.500
1930	0.700	0.462	0.452	0.717	0.525	18.670
1931	0.484	0.430	0.423	0.547	0.450	19.330
1932	0.470	0.417	0.427	0.583	0.495	17.670
1933	0.473	0.433	0.423	0.580	0.495	15.500
1934	0.370	0.348	0.407	0.595	0.458	14.690
1935	0.511	0.490	0.423	0.755	0.599	13.500
Average	0.497	0.457	0.474	0.663	0.562	16.551

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on Xiaojie*, 119-120.

prices were lower than before and then the prices began to rise. A former ward head explained the relation between low grain prices and peasant economy to the Japanese investigators. "At present (April, 1936), the grain prices rose a little. In 1933 and 1934, the sorghum price fell to such low [0.5 yuan per dou] that many landlords and middle class peasants were bankrupted. Until now, the bankrupting tendency had not been stopped. The fall of grain prices did not bring good fortunes for the farming laborers and other workers (as some people thought). In fact, as most rural laborers were hired by the landlords, the hardship for the employers affected the laborers." He also discussed the reasons for lower grain prices.

The rise and fall of grain prices were controlled by Tianjin market. On the other hand, the establishment of Manchuguo and the loss of Manchuria market also affected the prices [in

Ji county]. The decrease of grain merchants in the county seat reflected the effects of low grain prices. Now [in 1936], there are only two grain merchants who do other business at the same time. In former years, when grain prices were high, grain merchants exported wheat to Tianjin and imported millet for local people's consuming. Now, American wheat flour won [the competition in Tianjin market] and the merchants made no profit [in exporting local wheat]. Contrary to the fall of grain prices, except a few goods, the prices of manufactured products were rising. Most peasants had a deficit in their budgets.⁵²

There is no reliable information about how much American wheat flour was imported into Tianjin and how much was sold at the county level. But it is true that more and more machine milled wheat flour in the Shanghai area was imported into Qinghuangdao and Tianjin, some of it was sold in the surrounding counties, even beyond the Great Wall. In the depression years, the importing of outside grains lowered the local grain prices and brought hardship to the peasants.

Peasants' livelihood in the 1930s: An analysis of peasants' budget

Without detailed narratives or consecutive statistical materials about peasant consumption, it is difficult to assess the improvement or decline of the peasant's living standard. But the following analysis of peasants' budgets in four Eastern Hebei villages shows that in the 1930s, most peasants still lived a hard life and many of them had to borrow to keep them out of starvation or freezing to death.

The first village is Xiaojie in Tong county. Table 6-17 shows that among the 11 sample households, only one had a positive balance in 1935. An analysis of the expenditures reveals that 95 percent of the expenses was used for feeding, clothing,

⁵² Ibid., 133.

Table 6-17, Income and expenditures for the 11 sample households in Xiaojie, 1935

Household	Total income (yuan)	Total expenditure (yuan)	Spending for (percentage)			Balance (yuan)
			Food	Clothing	Light & heating	
#1	531.16	687.70	71%	5%	15%	-156.54
#2	234.12	257.78	77	5	16	-23.60
#3	138.00	207.88	82	5	12	-69.88
#4	7.39	180.22	86	6	8	-172.83
#5	64.86	176.61	82	5	9	-111.75
#6	208.78	333.19	83	5	8	-124.41
#7	47.84	195.16	84	5	10	-147.32
#8	46.42	95.50	74	6	12	-49.08
#9	89.34	90.80	76	10	12	-1.46
#10	153.53	133.53	80	7	12	20.00
#11	16.65	113.25	84	4	10	96.60
Total	1,538.09	2,471.62	78	5	12	-933.53

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on Xiaojie*, 207, 223, 227-228.

lighting and heating, only 5 percent was used for furniture, education, and other miscellaneous expenditures.

The second village is Michang in Fengrun county. The total income and expenditures for the 18 investigated households are shown in Table 6-18. It should be noted that these 18 households were the well-off in the village because most of them had a larger farm than the village average farm size (there were 103 households engaged in farming in Michang, the total farming land was 2,754.08 mu, on average, each household farmed only 26.74 mu).⁵³ But even for these 18 well-to-do, 8

⁵³ Mantetsu, *Report on Michang for 1938*, 80-81.

households (44 percent of the total) had a negative balance in their budgets at the end of the year. Compared with Xiaojie village, the percentage of expenditures for feeding, clothing and housing was a little lower, but it still composed 90 percent of the total expenditure.

Table 6-18, Income and expenditures for the 18 investigated households in Michang, 1938

Household	Farm size (mu)	Income (yuan)	Expenditure (yuan)	Spending for (percentage)			Balance (yuan)
				Feeding	Housing	Clothing	
#1	122.91	1,352.13	1,428.08	59%	25%	8%	-75.95
#2	66.14	529.60	452.50	78	16	1	77.10
#3	62.53	999.63	626.66	73	21	4	372.97
#4	59.75	1,039.78	1,225.55	46	37	2	-185.77
#5	32.75	464.52	606.95	54	25	12	-142.43
#6	32.99	419.86	468.92	60	29	9	-49.06
#7	19.20	315.28	225.94	68	19	7	89.34
#8	56.20	219.51	364.41	57	32	3	-144.90
#9	46.20	443.82	324.15	71	17	4	119.67
#10	41.80	431.54	390.83	59	28	6	40.71
#11	37.20	491.50	344.17	63	16	9	147.34
#12	38.29	638.14	401.78	68	19	4	236.37
#13	32.00	447.20	546.11	67	11	3	-98.91
#14	15.50	364.14	348.00	71	17	4	16.14
#15	21.00	223.20	235.70	71	17	2	-12.49
#16	15.00	379.53	271.97	73	14	8	107.56
#17	10.00	379.03	250.14	77	17	5	128.89
#18	6.80	204.39	214.67	64	16	4	-10.28
Average	40.35	519.05	484.73	62	23	5	34.32

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on Michang for 1938*, Table 6 and Table 11.

Note: The expenditure for housing includes house building, repairing, furnishing, lighting and heating.

The third village is Dabeiguan in Pinggu county. In 1936, the cash expenditure in the whole village was 2,622.677 yuan. The percentage of each item is shown in Table 6-19. In this village, about 84 percent of the cash expenditure was used for the basic living necessities, such as for housing, feeding, clothing, lighting and heating. The other important expenditure was education and luxuries, but only few of the rich residents could enjoy such things. For most of the peasants, the percentage of that for necessities should be higher than 84 percent.

According to Engel's law, an increase in the percentage of income spent for food indicates a lowering of the standard of living.⁵⁴ As we do not have information

Table 6-19, Cash expenditure in Dabeiguan, Pinggu county, 1936

Description of expenditure	Percentage of total expenditure
Housing	3.80%
Feeding	62.60
Clothing	5.91
Lighting and heating	8.67
Utensil	0.07
Education	6.74
Gifts for weddings and funerals	0.75
For wine and other luxuries	3.14
Entertainment	0.45
Medication	0.17
Papers	1.13
Others	3.99

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on Dabeiguan*, 104-107, Table 14.

⁵⁴ Hsiao-tung Fei, *Earthbound China*, 253.

about the percentage of peasants' expenditures in the earlier years, it is impossible to determine if the peasants' living standard was improved or lowered. But, the high percentage of income spending for food and other living necessities made it clear that in the 1930s the peasants' living standard was so low that most of them could only just keep their families from starvation. There was little or no money for education and other activities. In fact, many of them had to borrow from others to meet their families living demands. In Xiaojie village, among the 169 households, 15 households, or 9 percent of the total, were in debt in 1935. The debt information is detailed in Table 6-20.

As Table 6-20 shows, among the 15 households in debt, only one (household #105) borrowed for investment, the rate of interest charge was the lowest—15 percent per year. Two borrowed for emergency: household # 1 had been robbed and household #108 for buying a house. The remaining 12 households (80 percent of the total) borrowed just for living. As the annual interest charge was so high (20-30 %), no person wanted to borrow money if they had other means to support their families. Obviously, those who borrowed because of being too poor just struggled for a living.

In Dabeiguan, according to the investigation made in 1937, among the 98 households, 40 lived in debt. The times and causes of the 69 recorded borrowing are shown in Table 6-21.

The information provided by the peasants might not be 100 percent accurate, but the general trend suggested by Table 6-21 is clear: the saving of the peasants was so

Table 6-20, Debtors in Xiaojie village, 1935

Household	Debt (yuan)	Guaranty	Annual interest	Cause for borrowing
#1	2,000	Land	20%	Being robbed
#4	180	Reputation	30	Too poor
#8	80	Land	20	Too poor
#12	20	Reputation	20	Too poor
#17	10	Reputation	30	Too poor
#30	50	Land	30	Too poor
#59	10	Land	20	Too poor
#63	30	Reputation	30	Too poor
#74	200	Land	30	Too poor
#80	20	Reputation	20	Too poor
#105	200	Land	15	Investment
#108	210	House	25	Buying house
#122	20	House	20	Too poor
#127	30	Reputation	30	Too poor
#156	15	Land	20	Too poor

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on Xiaojie*, 133-134.

Table 6-21, Money borrowing in Dabeiguan

When the money was borrowed	Borrowed money was used for				Total
	Medication and funeral	Living	Paying rent or buying back pawned land	other purposed	
Before 1930	2	2	1	6	11
1931	1	4	1	1	7
1932	3	2		1	6
1933	9				9
1934	2	1	1		4
1935	5	2	2	1	10
1936	3	10	3	6	22
Total	25	21	8	15	69

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on Dabeiguan*, 108-113.

little that many of them could not deal with an emergency (such as family member illness or death) without borrowing. In the 69 cases of money borrowing, 25 (36 percent) were used for medication and funerals, 21 were used just for living. Only 8 cases could be classified as for productive use, such as paying rent and buying back the mortgaged land.

The last sample village is Lujiazhai in Zunhua county. The cash income and expenditure for the whole village in 1935 is shown in Table 6-22.

In Table 6-22, it is surprising to find that 1,204.62 yuan (17.56 percent of the total cash payment) was paid to the outside creditors as interest charge on the borrowed money. There was no information about how much money the peasants borrowed from

Table 6-22, Cash income and expenditure in Lujiazhai, 1935 (unit: yuan)

Income (earning from outside world)	
Fruit sale	2,000.00
Domestic animals and sideline products	1,000.00
Wages from outside working	843.75
Grain sale	972.11
Cotton sale	244.40
Sub-total	6,060.26
Expenditure (paying to the outside world)	
Buying all kinds of products	5,000.00
Paying to the ward government	557.32
Land tax	96.33
Paying the interest charge on borrowing	1,204.62
Sub-total	6,858.67
Total balance	-798.41

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on Lujiazhai*, 194.

outside the village, but the investigation provided detailed information about money borrowing in the western part of the village. Among the 71 households, 43 (61 percent) borrowed some money in the past years and did not pay it back. The total debt was 8,065 yuan. On average, each household borrowed 187.56 yuan. The reasons for money borrowing are shown in Table 6-23. As in other villages, most of the peasants borrowed just for living.

Table 6-23, Money borrowing in Western part of Lujiazhai, 1936

Borrowed money was used for	Household	Percentage
Living	21	48.84%
Funerals and weddings	8	18.60
Wedding, funeral, living and house-building	3	6.98
House-buying	2	4.65
Land-buying	2	4.65
Bankruptcy in commerce	3	6.98
Education	1	2.33
Living and investment	2	4.65
Paying interest on borrowed money, living	1	2.33
Total	43	100.00

Source: Mantetsu, *Report on Lujiazhai*, 159-162.

Were there more peasant households in debt in the 1930s than in the former decades? The investigation did not answer this question directly. But the peasants stated clearly that after the Manchurian Incident and the establishment of Manchuguo, the living was harder than before in Lujiazhai. Three factors were the direct or main causes: The first factor was that the Manchurian Incident and the Japanese invasion

caused more war related levies (*bingcai*), plundering and banditry disasters. The second factor was the limitation set up by Manchuguo on emigrating or working in Manchuria. The third factor was the high tariff set up along the Great Wall which affected the trading business.⁵⁵

For the causes of the crisis in rural economy during the 1930s, the investigators also provided their own observation in Lujiazhai. The permanent or historical causes were: too little land for each family, surplus of population, low land productivity and natural disaster. The special or immediate causes were: 1) Lower prices and smaller markets for agricultural products. 2) Heavier burdens for the peasants because of heavier taxes. 3) Shortcomings of politics [no explanation]. 4) Ignorance of the peasants. 5) Limitation on emigrating to Manchuria (decrease of earnings from working outside). 6) Depression in Kailuan coal mines (decrease of earnings from working outside). 7) Decline of sideline production (decrease of income). 8) War and banditry disaster (increase of taxes, decrease in production and social unrest). 9) Lower productivity because of rural economic depression [no explanation]. 10) Invasion of foreign goods (increase on cash payments to the outside).⁵⁶

The above analysis shows that in the 1930s, the peasants' burden to the state was dramatically increased, but at the same time, as outside markets and working opportunities were eventually closed, the income for the peasants in Eastern Hebei was decreasing. The world economic depression, the Japanese invasion and the spreading

⁵⁵ Mantetsu, *Report on Lujiazhai*, 195.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 196-197.

of banditry also contributed to the deterioration of the situation. All these facts made it harder for the peasants in Eastern Hebei to make a living. As so many peasants had fallen into debt, it is no doubt that there was a rural economic crisis in the 1930s.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION

As above chapters show, agriculture, industry and commerce were interlocked together to form the peasant economy. Undoubtedly, agriculture was the foundation, it employed most of the rural residents and the income from farming provided the basic living materials (grain) for the peasants. But, as chapter 2 and chapter 3 explained, the returns from agriculture was not only low, but also not enough to support the peasant families in Eastern Hebei. Most of the peasants had to engage in non-farming activities, such as working in sideline production or hiring out as a clerk in a commercial business. From this study the following conclusions are obtained.

Make a living by all means

As early as in 1932, R. H. Tawney, a famous British economic historian, had already found that in some districts of China, “the position of the rural population is that of a man standing permanently in water, so that even a ripple is sufficient to drown him.”¹ Philip Huang discovered that “a person nose deep in water would do almost anything to rise above the surface.”² Huang’s emphasis was that under the pressure of survival, the poor peasants would continue to put in their family labor in the limited land as long as the marginal product of labor remained above zero. But, the land production had its own limits, because, in traditional agriculture, peasants had little

¹ R. H. Tawney, *Land and Labor in China* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1932), 77.

² Huang, *The Peasant Economy*, 190.

power to overcome natural disaster. When drought deprived the last drop of moisture in the soil or flood waterlogged the field, the peasants could do nothing to save their crops. In this situation, the peasants had no reason to put their labor in farming. They had to find other outlets for their labor and earn a living outside of farming. In Eastern Hebei, the non-farming income from working in household sideline production or outside employment was far more important for the peasant economy than the income from hiring out as farming laborers. To return to Fei Xiaotong's question of how did the peasants in interior China make their living, it is clear, at least in Eastern Hebei, that peasants made their living by every means, they not only tilled the land, but also engaged in sideline production or working in other non-farming industries.

The patterns of combination of agriculture, industry and commerce were different in different regions and different levels. For the whole Eastern Hebei region, as a grain shortage area, industry (including sideline production, rural industry and modern machine industry) and commerce had important roles in the economy. But inside the region, some counties, such as Pinggu, Ji, Zunhua and Fengrun, either because the average farm size was larger or the soil was more fertile, agriculture was the main industry and more people made a living on farming. On the other hand, the counties near the big cities or those prone to waterlogging, such as Shunyi, Tong, Baodi and Ninghe, developed outside working or household industry to supplement their farming income. In the several eastern counties, going to Manchuria provided a main outlet for the rural population and the remittance from Manchuria became an important

part of the economy. At the village level, the same diversities are evident: most residents lived mainly on farming, but a few households were non-farming residents who earned their living by cottage industry or running a small grocery store. These farming and non-farming households depended on each other. They worked together to sustain the rural economy. Even inside the peasant household, agriculture, industry and commerce were woven together by family members who worked in different occupations. It is not surprising to find a peasant who worked on the field in summer and autumn but worked as a peddler or non-farming employee in the winter and spring. When discussing the peasant economy, it is certainly necessary to focus on the agricultural sector, but it is not correct to overlook or ignore the other sector of peasant life: the non-farming activity and income.

Re-evaluating feudalism and imperialism

For about three decades (1950-1980), the economic historians in mainland China focused their research on the exploitation of the peasants by landlords and capitalists, they condemned the negative role of feudalism and imperialism on the development of rural economy. Li Wenzhi and Zhang Youyi, the compilers of the three volumes of source materials on agricultural history, represent these historians, David Faure labeled their argument as the “pessimistic school.”³ It might be true that there was some kind of bias in selecting the source materials, but no one could argue against

³ Faure *The Rural Economy of Pre-liberation China*, 1.

the “pessimistic” facts about Chinese agriculture and peasants’ life revealed by the three volumes. The “pessimistic” opinion was not created by the historians. Both Chinese and foreign scholars who visited China had already talked about the crisis of the rural economy and the hardship of peasant life in the 1920s and 1930s. Alfred Lin had a good summary of these facts and arguments about the “rural crisis:”

If one runs through the pages of newspapers, journals and books published in the Nanjing Decade (1928-37), one will be overwhelmed by the sense of pessimism that pervaded the literature on existing rural conditions. The picture was clearly one of abject poverty for the bulk of the rural population. Terms such as *nongcun pochuan* (rural bankruptcy) and *nongcun konghuang* (panic in the countryside) gained currency in this period. Intellectuals unanimously agreed that rural China was in the midst of crisis. There were strong disagreements, however, as to the causes and nature of the crisis. Different solutions were thus proposed.⁴

Contrary to the overwhelming facts, Loren Brandt and David Faure made an “optimistic” interpretation of Chinese agricultural history based on their studies of south China. They calculated the terms of trade and concluded that most peasants’ income increased and their living standard improved. But neither of them gave any detailed statistics at the village or household level to support their “optimistic”

⁴ Alfred H. Y. Lin, *The Rural Economy of Guangdong, 1870-1937: A Study of the Agrarian Crisis and its Origins in Southernmost China* (London: MacMillan Press, 1997), 1. According to Lin, there were four primary groups proposing solutions: The first group, represented by John L. Buck, stressed the backwardness of Chinese agricultural technology and favored the modernization of Chinese agriculture and very minor reform of the property right. The second group, represented by Chen Hansheng, a communist economist, condemned the feudalism landownership and imperialism for the rural crisis, they regarded the radical restructuring of property rights and the elimination of imperialism as an imperative necessary in order to bring about fair distribution of resources and incomes. The third group was represented by Fei Xiaogong, they attributed the agrarian crisis mainly to the ruining of rural handicrafts and the solution was “rural industrialization.” The fourth group, represented by Yan Yangxhu (James Y. C. Yen) and Liang Shuming, conceptualized the agrarian crisis in broader, culturalistic terms and sponsored the “mass education” and “rural re-construction” movements.

argument.⁵ Undoubtedly, this study supports the “pessimistic” opinion and undermines the “optimistic” interpretation.

In discussing the Western impact on Chinese economic development, neither Chinese nor Western scholars distinguished normal international trade or outside investment from military invasion and super-economic exploitation in the past. Chinese scholars condemned all things related with foreign countries, they ignored the benefit brought by development of foreign markets (such as for the straw braid and processed bristles) and work opportunities created by foreign investment in modern factories. On the other hand, Western scholars only stressed the positive role of international trade and foreign investment. They talked little of the disaster caused by military invasions and the huge indemnity extorted from China by the foreign powers.⁶ This study shows that imperialism, especially the Japanese invasion, was one of the main causes for the hardship of the peasants’ life in the 1930s.

It is true that compared with the landownership in south China, especially with that in the Yangtze Delta, there were fewer absentee landlords in Eastern Hebei. But, even in Eastern Hebei, the landownership distribution was so unequal that many

⁵ Faure, *The Rural Economy of Pre-liberation China*; Brandt, *Commercialization and Agricultural Development*.

⁶ This argument is represented by Robert F. Dernberger. See his article “The role of the foreigner in China’s economic development,” Dwight H. Perkins, ed., *China’s Modern Economy in Historical Perspective*, 19–48. But, Albert Feuerwerker is an exceptional one. He pointed out that indemnity payments (interest and principal) on the Sino-Japanese War and the Boxer War totaled 476,982,000 taels between 1895 and 1911, or more than two times the estimated total capitalization of foreign and Chinese modern enterprises between 1895 and 1913. Feuerwerker, “Economic trends in the late Ch’ing Empire,” in John K. Fairbank and Kuang-ching Liu, ed., *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 11: *Late Ch’ing, 1800–1911*, part 2, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980), 1–69.

peasants could not make a living on their own land. For those peasants who worked on the rented land, the rent was so high (40 percent or half of the products) that few of them could make a reasonable return on rent farming. Contrary to the traditional argument that the agricultural production was so low that there was little or no accumulation for industrial investment, Carl Riskin demonstrated that in 1933, Chinese agriculture could produce a surplus (above the peasant's own consumption) which equaled about 24.5 percent of the Net Domestic Product. This surplus was not used as initial capital for industrial development but wasted by the landlords and the state employees.⁷ It is difficult to know how much percent of the total production in Eastern Hebei was paid to the landlord and state, but this study shows that no matter how much tax the peasants paid to the state, they got little back from the state in the form of service. All they paid was wasted by the state machine. Victor Lippit's study of land reform and its contribution to the industrial development demonstrated that feudalism (especially the landownership and state system) did hinder the development of productive forces.⁸

Rural industrialization and peasants' livelihood

This study shows that rural industry and commerce were important parts of the peasant economy in Eastern Hebei and the decline of non-farming income greatly hurt

⁷ Carl Riskin, "Surplus and stagnation in modern China," Perkins ed., *China's Modern Economy in Historical Perspective*, 70.

⁸ Victor D. Lippit, *Land Reform and Economic Development in China: A Study of Institutional Change and Development Finance* (White Plains, New York: International Arts and Sciences Press, Inc., 1974).

the peasant's livelihood. This conclusion accords with Fei Xiaotong's findings in south China and supports his general argument that treating Chinese rural economic problems "merely as problems of agriculture is one-sided."⁹

Undoubtedly, attributing the decline of rural industry and the impoverishment of China's peasants mainly to the intrusion of foreign machine made goods is unfair.¹⁰ But Fei Xiaotong held neither an "impractical nostalgia for the past" as a Chinese student has argued nor was he an "orthodox" conservative who tried to protect the peasant economy by boycotting machine-made products.¹¹ Fei Xiaotong knew it was useless to stick to the traditional handicraft industry and resist the coming of machine production, but it was impractical to tell the peasant just give up handicraft production and focus on farming alone. He made it clear that "it is a hopeless struggle for the unorganized mass of petty owner-workers. However skillful they may be, they are fighting a losing battle against the machine. But they must keep on fighting, because otherwise they cannot live."¹² Based on this realistic analysis, Fei Xiaotong proposed his solution for Chinese peasant economy: rural industrialization. He did not want just

⁹ Hsiao-tung Fei, *Earthbound China*, 306.

¹⁰ Fei argued that "the intrusion of foreign goods, which are gradually wiping out traditional industry. As the later disappears, the peasants lose a source of income and are the more impoverished." *Earthbound China*, 304.

¹¹ In the 1940s, a Chinese critic named Tang Deming accused Fei as having a "sentimental attachment to inefficient handicraft industries doomed to extinction, of an impractical nostalgia for the past, and irrational hatred of machines." He ridiculed Fei's proposal for rural industrialization as a "daydream of small-scale production." (Arkush, *Fei Xiaotong*, 170, and 307, note 20.) In the 1960s, an American anthropologist, Jack Potter, selected Fei Xiaotong as the representative of the "orthodox" [or "pessimistic" as David Faure termed] interpretation of modern China's rural economic history and especially targeted Fei's argument that foreign goods destroyed handicraft industry and hurt peasant livelihood. (Potter, *Capitalism and Chinese Peasant*, see especially the last chapter).

¹² Hsiao-tung Fei, *Earthbound China*, 305.

to restore old fashioned handicrafts but to revive and develop rural industry. He encouraged the introduction of machine and modern technology to rural industry and called the petty producers [peasants] to organize into cooperatives. He maintained that a more diffused rural industrialization was possible because electricity and modern transportation had ended the necessity for the big factories of the nineteenth century to be built around a central source of power—the steam engine. He warned that “if it [China’s industrialization] develops according to the pattern of European and American industry of the last few centuries—that is, if it is concentrated in urban areas and in the hands of a few capitalists—it will only aggravate the distress of the rural population, because it will take away from the village all its homestead industries and thus further decrease the income of the peasants.”¹³

Unfortunately for Chinese peasants, the policy makers did not adopt Fei’s proposal. After land reform in the early 1950s, the Chinese Communist Party took the Soviet model to collectivize the agricultural production and let the state monopolize industry and commerce. By state legislation, Chinese peasants were bound to the land as state slaves—the farming laborers. They could not change their occupation and move to the cities. In 1957, Fei Xiaotong had already found that focusing on agriculture did increase grain production but little improvement of peasant life occurred because the decline in or the total cancellation of non-farming incomes.¹⁴ Philip Huang

¹³ Ibid., 308.

¹⁴ Fei Hsiao-tung, *Rural Development in China*, 2-40. Fei was criticized in the Anti-rightist movement of late 1957 for his finding that peasant’s livelihood had seen little improvement.

called this paradox phenomena as “[agricultural production] increase without [labor production] development.”¹⁵

After 1980, the development of rural industry (both collectively owned and private enterprises) was permitted by the government and more and more peasants engaged in industry and commerce again. The dramatic development of the rural economy and the improvement of peasant’s livelihood proved Fei Xiaotong’s hypothesis that rural industrialization was critical to the prosperity of the peasant households and demonstrated indirectly the importance of industry and commerce in the peasant’s life before the revolution.¹⁶

¹⁵ Huang, *The Peasant Family and Rural Development in the Yangzi Delta, 1350-1988*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), chapter 11 and the conclusion.

¹⁶ According to the governmental statistics, in 1978, the beginning year of rural reform, the average non-farming income per capita [for farmer] was 20.1 yuan, it composed 15 percent of the total net income. In 1986, the average non-farming income per capita and its percentage in the total income increased to 199.3 yuan and 36.6 percent respectively. Dong Fureng, *Industrialization and China’s Rural Modernization* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992), 68, Table 6.4. Another statistic shows that by 1992, Chinese peasants drew more income from non-farming sectors than from farming activities. Samuel P. S. Ho, “Rural Non-agricultural Development in Post-reform China: Growth, Development Patterns, and Issues,” *Pacific Affairs* 68 (Fall 1995), 363, Table 1.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Amano, Motonosuke. *Kason zatsuzei ka no kahoku noson* (Villages under the heavy taxes in Hebei province). Dalian, 1936.

Arkush, R. David. *Fei Xiaotong and Sociology in Revolutionary China*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981.

Beining tielu yanxian jingji diaocha baogao (Report of the Beining Railway Economic Survey Team). Beijing, 1936.

Brandt, Loren. "Review of Philip Huang's *The Peasant Economy and Social Change in North China*." *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 35 (April 1987), 670-682.

_____. *Commercialization and Agricultural Development: Central and Eastern China, 1870-1937*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Buck, John Lossing. *Land Utilization in China*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1937.

Changli xianzhi (Changli Gazetteer), 1933.

China, Imperial Maritime Customs. *Decennial Reports on the Trade, Industries, etc., of the Ports Open to Foreign Commerce, and on the Condition and Development of the Treaty Port Provinces, 1892-1901; 1902-1911; 1912-1921; 1922-1931*. Shanghai: Inspector General of Customs.

_____. *Returns of Trade and Trade Reports (1909)*. Shanghai: Inspector General of Customs, 1910.

Chugoku noson kanko chosa kankokai. *Chugoku noson kanko chosa* (Investigations of Customary Practices in Rural China), 6 vols. Tokyo: Iwanami, 1952-1958.

Cong, Hanxiang, ed. *Jidai Ji-Lu-Yu xiangcun* (Rural Ji-Lu-Yu in modern period). Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue, 1995.

Cressey, George B. *China's Geographic Foundation: A Survey of the Land and its People*. New York: McGraw-Hill Company, Inc., 1934.

- Dernberger, Robert F. "The Role of the Foreigner in China's Economic Development, 1840-1949," in Dwight H. Perkins, ed., *China's Modern Economy in Historical Perspective*, 19-48. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975.
- Dong, Fureng. *Industrialization and China's Rural Modernization*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992.
- Duara, Prasenjit. *Culture, Power, and the State: Rural North China, 1900-1942*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988.
- Fang, Xianting, ed. *Zhongguo jingji yanjiu* (Studies of the Chinese Economy). 2 vols. Changsha: Shangwu, 1938.
- Faure, David. *The Rural Economy of Pre-Liberation China: Trade Expansion and Peasant Livelihood in Jiangsu and Guangdong, 1870-1937*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Fei, Hsiao-tung (Fei Xiaotong). *Peasant Life in China: A Field Study of Country Life in the Yangtze Valley* (with a preface by Bronislaw Malinowski). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., fifth print, 1962.
- _____. *Rural Development in China: Prospect and Retrospect* (with a foreword by Tang Tsou). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.
- Fei, Hsiao-tung, and Chih-I Chang. *Earthbound China: A Study of Rural Economy in Yunnan*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945.
- Feng, Hefa, ed. *Zhongguo jingji lunwen ji* (Research on Chinese Economy). N. p.
- Fengrun xianzhi* (Fengrun Gazetteer), 1921.
- Feuwerker, Albert. "Economic Trends in the Late Ch'ing Empire," in John K. Fairbank and Kwang-ching Liu, ed., *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 11: *Late Ch'ing, 1800-1911*, part 2, 1-69. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.
- Fong, H. D. (Fang Xianting). *The Growth and Decline of Rural Industrial Enterprise in North China: A Case Study of the Cotton Handloom Weaving Industry in Paoti*. Nankai Institute of Economics, Industry Series, Bulletin no. 8. Tianjin, 1936. Reprinted by Garland Publishing in New York in 1980.

- Gottschang, Thomas Richard. *Migration From North China to Manchuria: An Economic History, 1891-1942*. Dissertation, The University of Michigan, 1982.
- Hebei sheng mianchan gaijin hui. *Hebei sheng mianchan diaocha baogao, 1936* (Report on the investigation of cotton production in Hebei, 1936). N.p. 1937.
- Hinton, Harold C. *The Grain Tribute System of China (1845-1911)*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956.
- Ho, Samuel P. S. "Rural Non-agricultural Development in Post-Reform China: Growth, Development Patterns, and Issues." *Pacific Affairs* 68 (Fall 1995), 360-391.
- Huang, Philip C. C. *The Peasant Economy and Social Change in North China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985.
- _____. *The Peasant Family and Rural Development in the Yangzi Delta, 1350-1988*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990.
- Ji xianzhi* (Ji Gazetteer), 1944.
- Ju, Zhengdong. *Hebei qidi zhi yanjiu* (A study of bannerland in Hebei) in Xiao Zheng, ed., *Minguo 20 niandai zhongguo dalu tudi wenti ziliao* (Materials on the land question in the mainland during the 1920s), no.75. Taipei: Chengwen, 1977.
- Leting xianzhi* (Leting Gazetteer), 1877.
- Li Daozhao guju* (Li Daozhao's former residence). Shijiazhuang: Hebei Renmin, 1996.
- Li Dazhao yu guxiang* (Li Dazhao and his home town). Beijing: Zhongyiang wenxian, 1994.
- Li, Wenzhi, ed. *Zhongguo jindai nongyeshi ziliao* (Source materials on the agricultural history of modern China, vol. 1: 1840-1911). Beijing: Sanlian, 1957.
- Lin, Alfred H. Y. *The Rural Economy of Guangdong, 1870-1937: A Study of the Agrarian Crisis and its Origins in Southernmost China*. London: MacMillan Press, 1997.
- Linyu xianzhi* (Linyu Gazetteer), 1929.

Lippit, Victor D. *Land Reform and Economic Development in China: A Study of Institutional Change and Development Finance*. White Plains, New York: International Arts and Sciences Press, Inc., 1974.

Luan xianzhi (Luan Gazetteer), 1937.

Luan zhouzhi (Luanzhou Gazetteer), 1891.

Lulong xianzhi (Lulong Gazetteer), 1931.

Mallory, Walter H. *China: Land of Famine*. New York: American Geographical Society, 1928.

Minami Manshu tetsudo kabushiki kaisha, Chosabu. *Kita shina menka chosa shiryō* (Investigation Materials on Cotton Production in North China). Dalian, 1939.

_____. *Hokushina nogyo chosa shiryō* (Investigation Materials on North China Agriculture: Investigation of Grain Market in Tianjin). Dalian.

Minami Manshu tetsudo kabushiki kaisha, Hokushi jimukyoku chosabu. *Noka keizai chosa hokoku: Hojun ken sosochin michangson* (Report on the Investigation of Peasant Household Economy: Michang Village, Fengrun County), vol. 1: 1937; vol. 2: 1938; vol. 3: 1939. Dalian, 1938-41.

_____. *Kahokusho zeisei chosa hokokusho* (Report on the Investigation of Taxing System in Hebei Province). Dalian, 1938.

Minami Manshu tetsudo kabushiki kaisha, Keizai chosakai. *Hokushi manshukoku kan rikkyo boeki no genjo* (Trading Conditions Between North China and Manchuguo Through Land Route). Dalian, 1935.

Minami Manshu tetsudo kabushiki kaisha, Kito chiku noson jittai chosaban. *Kito chiku jurokuko ken kensei gaikyo chosa hokokusho* (Report on the Investigation of General Conditions of the Sixteen Counties in Eastern Hebei). Tianjin, 1936.

_____. *Kito chiku nai nijugo noson jittai chosa hokokusho* (Report on the Investigation of Actual Conditions in 25 Villages in Eastern Hebei). 2 vols. Tianjin, 1936.

_____. *Kito chiku nai noson sangyo tokubetsu chosa hokokusho* (Report on the Investigation of Rural Industries in Eastern Hebei). Tianjin, 1936

- _____. *Kito chiku nai sentaku noson jittai chosa gaiyo hokokusho* (Report on the Summary of the Investigation of Actual Conditions of the Selected Villages in Eastern Hebei). Tianjin, 1936.
- Minami Manshu tetsudo kabushiki kaisha, Kito noson jittai chosaban. *Dainiji kito noson jittai chosa hokokusho: tokeihen. Dai ichiban: Heikoku ken* (Report on the Second Investigation of Actual Conditions on Eastern Hebei Villages: Statistical Volume. First Group: Dabeiguan Village, Pinggu County). Dalian, 1937.
- _____. *Dainiji kito noson jittai chosa hokokusho: tokenhen. Dai sanban: Hojun ken* (Report on the Second Investigation of Actual Conditions on Eastern Hebei Villages: Statistical Volume. Third Group: Michang Village, Fengrun County). Dalian, 1937.
- _____. *Dainiji kito noson jittai chosa hokokusho: tokenhen. Dai yonban: Shorei ken* (Report on the Second Investigation of Actual Conditions on Eastern Hebei Villages: Statistical Volume. Fourth Group: Qianlianggezhuang Village, Changli County). Dalian, 1937.
- Minami Manshu tetsudo kabushiki kaisha, Tenshin jimusho chosaka. *Ji ken kikakuso pingku ken kakakusho shoshinsai kusho noson jittai chosa hokoku* (Report on the Investigation of Actual Conditions of Jigezhuang Village in Ji County, Xiagazhuang, Xiaoxinzhai and Huzhuang in Pinggu County). Tianjin, 1936.
- _____. *Junka ken rokasai noson jittai chosa hokoku* (Report on the Investigation of Actual Conditions of Lujiazhai Village, Zunhua County). Tianjin, 1936.
- _____. *Kahokusho noson jittai chosa shiryō* (Investigation Materials Regarding Actual Conditions of Villages in Hebei Province: Dongyangqiu Village in Wangdu County and Other 18 Villages). Tianjin, 1936.
- _____. *Kita Shina ni okeru mensakuchi noson jijo: kahokusei tonken chogai son* (Report on the Conditions of Cotton-growing Area in North China: Xiaojie Village, Tong County, Hebei Province). Tianjin, 1936.
- _____. *Kito kuiki no boeki gaikyo to kazei jijyo* (Report on the Actual Conditions of Trade and Tariff in Eastern Hebei). Tianjin, 1936.
- _____. *Kito kuiki tokusyu boeki no jitsujo* (Report on the Actual Conditions of the "Special Trade" in Eastern Hebei). Tianjin, 1936.

_____. *Kito tenshin kan kawase torihiki kankei cho* (Report on the Trading Relations Between Eastern Hebei and Tianjin). Tianjin, 1936.

_____. *Miyun ken shoeison xianghe ken houyanji noson jittai chosa hokoku* (Report on the Investigation of Actual Conditions of Xiaoying Village in Miyun County, and Houyansi Village in Xianghe County). Tianjin, 1936.

Morse, Hosea Ballou. *The Trade and Administration of China* (third revised edition). New York: Russell & Russell, 1967.

Myers, Ramon H. *The Chinese Peasant Economy: Agricultural Development in Hopei and Shantung, 1890-1949*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970.

Nakanishi, Isao. "Kahoku noson keizai no gaikyo: kito chiku no tochi bunpai" (General Information of Rural Economy in Hebei Province: Land Distribution in Eastern Hebei) in *Mantetsu chosa geppo* (South Manchuria Railway Company Research Department Monthly), 18.4 (April 1938): 19-49.

Payer, Cheryl. "Was the Chinese Peasant Exploited? A Review of *The Chinese Peasant Economy: Agricultural Development in Hopei and Shantung, 1890-1949* by Ramon H. Myers." *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 2.2 (January 1975), 229-236.

Perdue, Peter C. *Exhausting the Earth: State and Peasant in Hunan, 1500-1850*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987.

Perkins, Dwight H. *Agricultural Development in China: 1368-1938*. Chicago: Aldine, 1969.

_____, ed. *China's Modern Economy in Historical Perspective*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975.

Potter, Jack M. *Capitalism and the Chinese Peasant: Social and Economic Change in a Hong Kong Village*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968.

Qian-an xianzhi (Qian-an Gazetteer), 1903.

Riskin, Carl. "Surplus and Stagnation in Modern China," in Dwight Perkins, ed., *China's Modern Economy in Historical Perspective*, 49-84. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975.

Sanhe xianzhi (Sanhe Gazetteer), 1935.

Shin-min-kai. *Kito chiku fusoku ryokoku chosahyo* (Investigation of grain shortage in Eastern Hebei). Beijing, 1939.

Shina chugun shireibu. *Hokushi yotei tetsudo chosa hokoku* (Report on the investigation of scheduled railroad in north China)

Shunyi xianzhi (Shunyi Gazetteer), 1933.

Skinner, G. William, ed. *The City in Late Imperial China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977.

Ta Kung Pao (Dagong Daily). Tianjin.

Taiko yugen koshi. *Kito bokyo jichi seifu kannai tentogyo chosa hokokusho* (Report on the investigation of pawn business in Eastern Hebei). 1936.

Tawney, Richard Henry. *Land and Labour in China*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1932.

Tianjin dang-an guan, ed. *Tianjin shanghai dang-an huibian* (Archive materials of Tianjin Chamber of Commerce), 3 vols. Tianjin: Tianjin renmin, 1989-1996.

TIME (The Weekly Newsmagazine), 5 June 1933, 17-18; 4 November 1935, 28; 11 May 1936, 25-26.

Toyo jijo kenkyukai. *Kito soran* (General information of Eastern Hebei). Tokyo, 1936.

Wang, Yaowu. *Laobaixing dayoushi* (Ragged Verses). Beiping, 1936.

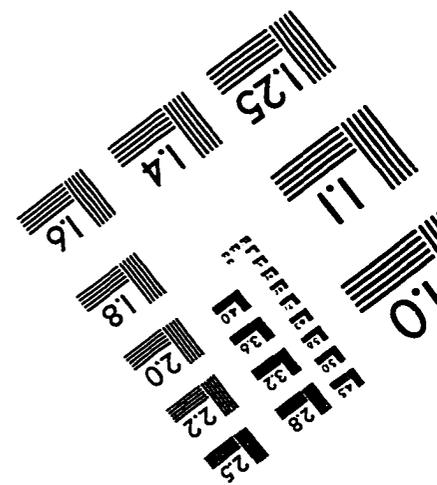
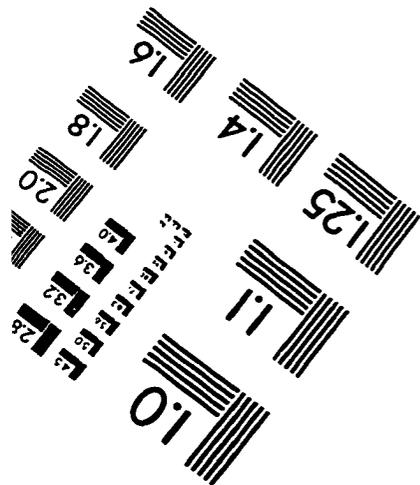
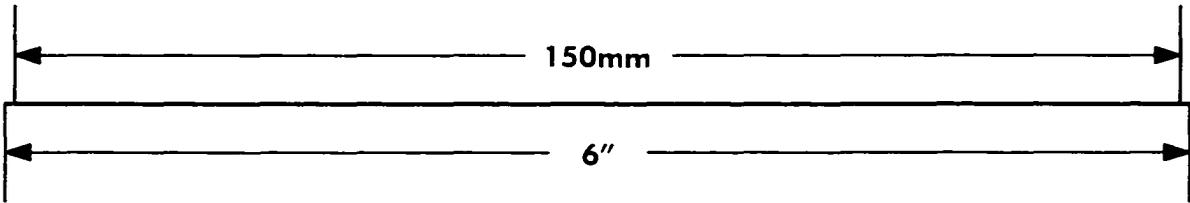
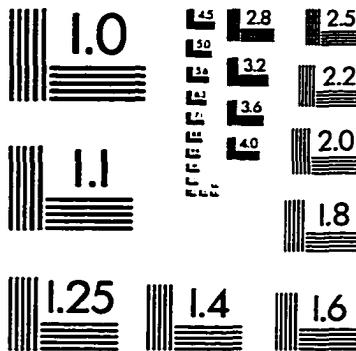
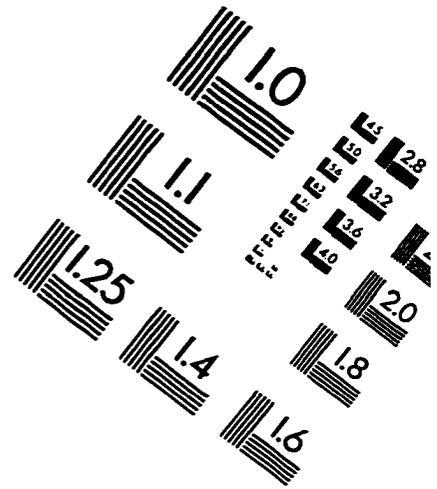
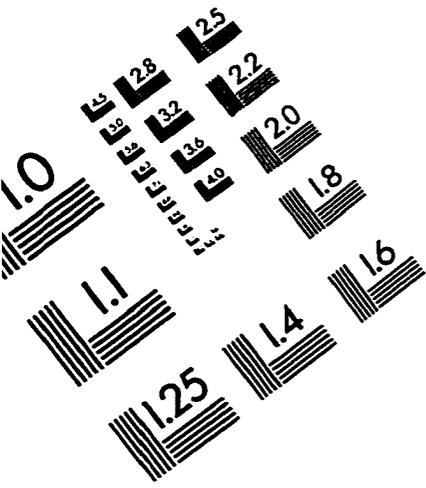
Wei, Hongyun, ed. *Er-shi shiji san-si-shi niandai jidong nongcun shehui diaocha yu yanjiu* (Investigation and research on Eastern Hebei villages, 1930s and 1940s). Tianjin: Tianjin renmin, 1996.

Yongping fuzhi (Yongping Prefecture Gazetteer), 1876.

Zhang, Jinchen. *Luanxian jiaofei jilue* (Record of suppressing the bandits in Luan county). N.p.

Zhang, Youyi, ed. *Zhongguo jindai nongyeshi ziliao* (Source materials on the agricultural history of modern China), vol.2: 1912-1927; vol.3: 1927-1937. Beijing: Sanlian, 1957.

IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



APPLIED IMAGE, Inc
1653 East Main Street
Rochester, NY 14609 USA
Phone: 716/482-0300
Fax: 716/288-5989

© 1993, Applied Image, Inc., All Rights Reserved