And that was a style generally viewed as vulgar by literati poets.

It took many centuries for these ideas to be clarified. The good thing is that, with these new discoveries, we do not think less of Ouyang Hsiu. In fact, his reputation will continue to rise and become even more of a legend—the image of a true poet of no pretension, a perfect symbol of enormous stylistic versatility. That Egan is able to come so close to the true image of such a complex figure deserves the highest praise.

The Peasant Economy and Social Change in North China *by Philip C. C. Huang*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985. Pp. xv+369. $38.50.

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Philip Huang has written a very important book which raises the study of peasant society and the economic history of rural China to new levels. He does so not only by revising several accepted formulations and asking new questions, but also by developing a very adroit methodology which combines the use of intensive case studies with extensive quantitative data, thereby achieving a certain representativeness while retaining much of the particularities of the villages. Huang studies the peasant economy of the Hebei and northwestern Shandong plain from the early Qing until the 1940s, but the bulk of the data deals with the 20th century. These data are the extraordinarily rich Japanese surveys of north China conducted under the auspices of the South Manchurian Railway Co. (Mantetsu) in the 1930s and the 1940s. These materials have occasionally come under a cloud of suspicion because they were conducted under the Japanese occupation. But Huang has sought to evaluate and use them with such care that the rich harvest he has been able to reap from them is also a largely believable one. He has supplemented these data with archival material from the Board of Punishments of the Qing and the Baodi County Punishment Office to give the study some historical depth.

The greater part of the book studies the peasant economy, and here the central concern of the analysis deals with what happened to the rural economy of north China in the last two hundred years

under conditions of growing commercialization and population pressure. Huang traces the spread of cotton cultivation as the chief agency of commercialization in this region, and shows how by the end of the 18th century the pattern of stratification of the 20th century had already taken shape. Where in Europe commercialization led to capitalism and the proletarianization of the peasant economies, in China social differentiation took place only on a partial basis, and the peasant economy expressed through the small farm family basically persisted. A good deal of the book deals with this partial differentiation—semi-proletarianization of poor peasants who hire themselves out as wage labor while still holding on to their tiny plots, and the emergence of managerial farmers who use wage labor in addition to family labor. As is well known, landlordism was not widespread in north China and Huang's study does not focus on it.

Rather, he is much more interested in assessing the extent to which the managerial farms, which constituted about 10 percent of the cultivated area in the 1930s, represented a qualitatively different form of production organization from the small family farm, and whether they bear out the "sprouts of capitalism" thesis advanced by several PRC historians. After undertaking a careful study of the manner in which managerial farmers utilized the factors of production (including a detailed chapter on the use of farm animals), Huang concludes that, except for their superior ability to utilize hired labor more optimally, managerial farms were in no way different from the small family farms and remained very much tied to the small peasant economy. Moreover, once the managerial farmer's farm size exceeded 200 *mou*, he typically left farming to pursue trade and office-holding, leasing out the land and allowing it to return to the small peasant economy.

The bulk of the peasant population eked out a living in this small peasant economy, either as owner-cultivators, tenants, part-owners part-tenants, or part-owners part-wage laborers. The only analytical distinction Huang makes within this category is between the fulltime owner-cultivator (middle and rich peasants) and the poor peasant undergoing semi-proletarianization (all the rest). Although these small family farms achieved levels of output per *mou* comparable to those on the managerial farms and were not qualitatively different from them in most respects, they were severely

disadvantaged by their scale and available resources, and were able to achieve these output levels at the cost of greater average labor input than on the managerial farms. This is a critical issue in Huang's analysis and has important implications. The fact is that managerial farmers were able to use labor more efficiently because they hired labor only as they needed it. This was not an option available to the family farmers who could not fire excess labor (in the absence of alternative employment opportunities), and were forced by the consumption needs of the family to drive labor even when the marginal output of this labor began to approach zero (Huang uses Clifford Geertz's notion of involution to characterize this phenomenon). What this means is that in any attempt to understand the economic behavior of the peasantry, none of the available theories is fully adequate. Huang points to three dominant theories, the formalist theories of the rational peasant, the substantivist theories of Chayanov and James Scott, and the Marxist theory of feudal exploitation. The formalists will be able to explain the behavior of the managerial farmer who optimized his scarce resources, but in order to explain the apparently non-rational behavior of the family farmer who was more concerned with his subsistence needs, one will need to turn to the substantivists. Huang's study generates several other phenomena which suggest that peasants often mix their strategies of profit and survival depending on their position in the economy. Huang's use of Marxist theory to analyze the poorest, semi-proletarianizing peasant, however, is something of an analytical non sequitur. Marxism explains the semi-proletarian's *position* in society, not his *strategy*. In terms of his strategy of survival, he too used whatever combination of the two strategies was available to him.

Huang then takes up the range of questions that are generated by this two-fold (sometimes three-fold if we include the semi-proletarianized peasant as an independent category) structural characterization of the rural economy of north China. Why was managerial farming unable to make the breakthrough to capitalist farming, or at least, to higher levels of productivity and technology? Here, while he seems to be mainly in agreement with Mark Elvin's principal thesis that population growth (and cheap labor) acted as disincentives to allow the breakthrough in labor-saving technology, yet

he shows that the breakthrough, when it did come in the fifties, was not laborsaving, and that it required, not a reduction of the population, but institutional changes permitting large-scale state investment and collective mobilization. On the issue of how peasants who were becoming a proletariat were able to (and sought to) hold on to the tiny, and often uneconomical, plots, Huang shows the importance of commercialized handicraft production as an important source of supplementary income, which in many cases was strengthened with the deepening impact of the world economy. And still more ironically, he shows how it presented the real obstacle to the growth of the modern Chinese textile industry. On the issue of imperialism, Huang takes a non-committal position, although he believes that accelerated commercialization and other circumstances of the 20th century did depersonalize relations between employer and worker, and landlord and tenant.

For the most part, Huang uses his data on the peasant economy meticulously, and his arguments are convincing. Moreover, he has also given us a good introduction to the scholarship of the PRC on the peasant economy. However, there are still a few areas where the evidential basis for an argument is a bit thin. For example, he gives only one instance (p. 164) to indicate that the small family farm had to tolerate excess labor, and none to support the statement that many small-holders were forced to hire themselves out during the busy season, and that because of this, the output of this group declined. It is, then, only because we sense it to be intuitively plausible, that we accept the proposition that small family farms achieved comparable levels of productivity as managerial farms because for the small farms, farm output fell off more dramatically at less-than-optimal levels of labor use than it increased at above-optimal levels.

The last seventy-five pages of Huang's book deal with the political universe of the peasant—the nature of the village community and the relationship of the village to the state during both the Qing and the Republic. The more recent orthodoxy in the China field holds, of course, that the village was neither a significant nor a solidary community. Huang shows this to be basically incorrect in north China. Using the famous six village Mantetsu study (*Chūgoku nōson kankō chōsa*), Huang develops a typology of villages to distinguish those in which the nature of community was rather strong

from those in which it was weakening, and those in which the community had become completely atomized.

The ingenuity of this typology derives from the fact that it is based upon the analytical categories he developed in the previous section: the differentiation of the peasant economy into owner-cultivators, and semi-proletarians and wage workers. In villages where the owner-cultivators, including managerial farmers as well as rich and middle peasants, continue to hold on to their lands, solidary institutions of the village continued to prevail even through the trying circumstances of the 20th century—accelerated commercialization, political chaos and an intrusive state. Indeed, these solidary villages responded to these pressures through a process of community "closure" and resistance to the outside forces—especially of state agents. In the other types of villages, the process of semi-proletarianization caused by population pressure and commercialization, led to the erosion of the owner-cultivator group which had a strong identification with the village and its government. In the 20th century, these villages turn out to be extraordinarily vulnerable to political abuse by the agents of the state who are now cast in the role of the "local bully."

The greatest strength of this analysis is that it allows us to differentiate the political behavior of the *peasantry* in accordance with their relationship to the economic scheme. Thus, during a communist revolution, appeals to resist state taxation would probably be more likely to mobilize the owner-cultivators, whereas land reform and rent reduction would appeal to the poor peasants. Huang's analysis might provide the Hamza Ahlavi/Eric Wolf thesis—that the Maoist revolution relied in considerable degree on the "middle peasant" —with a more solid foundation than it has had so far. Yet I am not sure if one could differentiate whole *villages* in terms so vague as solidary and atomized. As Huang himself admits, the data on Houxiazhai and Lengshuigou in Shandong are the least reliable, and yet they are the ones identified as the two solidary villages. The Red Spear organization in Houxiazhai may have served not to "close" the community, but rather to link it to a larger body. So too the defense organization in Lengshuigou which was part of a multi-village organization (*Kankō chōsa* 4: 34). It is even harder to demonstrate that community institutions (like lineages in Shajing

for instance) had been strong in the recent past and were in the process of disintegration. The reason one can provide counterfactual data is that the concept itself is so slippery, and not because Huang has not done his work well.

Indeed, Huang has done his work extremely well, and the foregoing criticism does not detract in any significant way from what I believe to be a correct analysis of the political process in rural north China. On the whole, the book remains one of the most well-researched and rigorously analyzed studies of Chinese peasant society to date.

The Columbia Book of Chinese Poetry: From Early Times to the Thirteenth Century *translated and edited by Burton Watson*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984. Pp. 385. $19.95.

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The name of Burton Watson is well known to scholars and laymen interested in translations from the Chinese. No other person alive today has done as much as he has to make Chinese literature, history, and philosophy available to a broad audience in graceful English translations. The appearance of a new book from the pen of this indefatigable scholar-translator is always a happy event. The present volume brings together many of his earlier translations of Chinese poetry, augmented by a large number of new translations. To be more precise, this volume contains 442 poems by 97 authors, including many anonymous poems. Of the 442 poems, 271 (about 60%) are reprinted or revised from Watson's earlier publications, and 171 poems are newly translated. But the book under review does not contain all of his earlier translations of Chinese poetry, thus it does not make his earlier books obsolete.

His earlier publications devoted wholly or in part to Chinese poetry are the following (published by Columbia University Press unless otherwise indicated): *Records of the Grand Historian of China, Translated from the Shih chi of Ssu-ma Ch'ien*, 2 vols., 1961. *Early Chinese Literature*, 1962. *Cold Mountain: 100 Poems by the T'ang Poet Han-shan*, New York: Grove Press, 1962. *Su Tung-p'o: Selections from a Sung*