

# CHINA'S

**HILL GATES**

Also by Hill Gates:

*Chinese Working-Class Lives:*

*Getting By in Taiwan*

# MOTOR



A  
Thousand  
Years of  
Petty  
Capitalism

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For VERA NEILL GATES

and for ARTHUR

*yin and yang of my life*



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H. G.

*Stanford, California*

## Chinese Dynasties of the Late Empire

SONG	960–1279
YUAN (MONGOL)	1279–1368
MING	1368–1644
QING (MANCHU)	1644–1911

# CHINA'S MOTOR

## CHINA'S HEARTLAND



## Introduction

The assortment of goods at the *Mao Chou* fair is complete, yet there are no collars made of the skin of hedgehogs, no long jackets of pigskin; neither are there golden manure forks nor silver manure baskets.

— Proverb

In March 1895, China was exhausted from its current war with Japan and from a demoralizing half-century of Western imperialist intrusions. While the war rolled over Manchuria in the north, the Japanese were also preparing to attack the prosperous island of Taiwan — Formosa — off the southwest coast of China. Into that steamy frontier province came a young American war correspondent, James W. Davidson, to observe the inevitable hostilities.

Davidson found little information available about Formosa and so set out to write its history from the year 1430, when Chinese immigrants began to colonize the island. *The Island of Formosa*, published in 1903, contains both his historical researches and anecdotes and observations gathered during his several years' stay. At that time, the people of Taiwan were in the midst of a decades-long tea-export boom. Yet they had seen few foreigners, received almost no Western products, and remained innocent of the effects of highly mechanized industrialization. The tea, rice, and sugar they exported were produced with age-old technological and social devices — ingenious, simple equipment and heavy reliance on family firms. These people were very different from what they are today, their economy unlike Western economies in some interesting and subtle ways.

One of the earliest mechanical intrusions from the West into that very Chinese society was the railroad, built in 1887 between Taipei, the capital, and the small port of Jilong. Davidson's travels on this railroad inspired an irritable description:

The conductor awakened to his duties and commenced the collection of fares. But few were provided with tickets, the others desiring to pay, or as it proved, not to pay, on the train. . . . They [the delinquents] comprised a large propor-

tion and appeared greatly opposed to adding their mite to the collection. Still our conductor was obdurate and stuck to each one until he got something out of him. The passengers commonly produced a small string of cash which they handed to the conductor who made a rough estimate of their value, ordinarily to find a great shortage. . . . At it they went at the top of their voices until the passenger by dealing out a few cash at a time had paid somewhere near the amount, or by greater vocal power had worn out the conductor. . . . But regardless of this labor, the conductor was no doubt pleased; it permitted him to abstract his "squeeze" which would not have been possible had all provided themselves with tickets. . . . the conductor next tackled the destitutes; at least such they were according to their own distressing tales. Three or four of these refused absolutely to produce anything, and the wrangling recommenced. The conductor now searched the clothes of the offenders, . . . and then seizing a chicken from one of the delinquents, a sort of combination pillow and small trunk from a second, and a roll of filthy clothing from a third, he returned to my small compartment, tranquil and apparently satisfied. Whether or not the stuff was redeemed on the arrival of the train at Keelung, I cannot say.

(1967:251)

Davidson further informs us that freight was consigned to this railroad only after various neighboring stationmasters had bid on it. Rates depended more on competition among employees of the railroad than on any fixed schedule. The lowest-bidding stationmaster got a cut of the shipping charges.

Davidson came from a part of the world where railroads were large, complex organizations. He therefore made an error that perhaps most people make on first reading his patronizing description: he assumed that the importation of track, cars, and engines automatically carried with it the importation of a system of human activities, habits, and values. He assumed that every reasonable, honest person would accept the idea that one *must* buy a ticket to ride the railroad; that it would be deeply embarrassing to be publicly berated for not paying; that riders would feel obliged, contrary to their immediate interests, to follow the railroad's rules; that "they have to make a buck, too"; and, ultimately, that "if everyone did that" the railroad would fail (as Taiwan's did, rather soon).

Davidson had an oversimplified idea of what a railroad is. Track and cars do, in one sense, make a railroad, but without certain habits on the part of employees and passengers, equipment will not move people and freight or constitute an impersonal capitalist corporation.

The Taiwanese had received only the hardware of railroading. They brought to their transactions with it a set of attitudes and values indigenously developed by petty capitalists — family businesspeople — because these were the economic circumstances with which they were most familiar. Chinese firms were nearly all run on the principle that the buyer should buy as cheap, and the seller sell as dear,

as possible, the gain from the transaction going directly into their respective pockets. Most employees were trusted relatives or apprentices, who were closely watched to make sure they put the owner's interests before their own. Personal ties constrained relations of production; impersonal corporations were simply unknown.

In the 1990s, petty-capitalist businesses with similar principles and practices still flourish in Taiwan (and Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and South Korea). They have been reinvented in China, where they bear a startling resemblance to those that the socialist experiment attempted to expunge. Once again, one may haggle with conductors over the price of space on trains, as I have done recently in Fujian. Indigenous petty capitalism continues to coexist with, benefit from, and invade large-scale enterprises.

Is the notion of "petty capitalism" useful? What does it mean, how does it operate, what are its political-economic consequences? This book is an attempt to discern macrostructural continuities that underlie the changing surface of Chinese life in what may be loosely called modern times: the late empire and its successor states in China and Taiwan. Twenty years ago, when China seemed to be cutting an absolutely original path to socialism, such a focus would have been absurd. Since the privatizations of the 1980s, the astonishing familiarity of present-day social invention there insistently poses the question of what late-imperial and contemporary Chinese have in common.

In this book, I entertain both the not-very-radical proposition that something that can be called Chinese culture coheres over this large stretch of time and space — despite all the reasons why it should not — and the far more radical proposition that we can sketch its outlines fairly parsimoniously. We can determine not simply what are the characteristics that are at once common to the Han and distinctive of them — a list of traits can do that — but rather what was the political-economic dynamic that pressured people in widely varying circumstances, over a very long time, to make similar life choices, to act and believe in ways that they and we recognize as Chinese. Chinese history is anything but static, and change must be part of any useful analysis of it. But there are congruences as well that enable the Chinese of the present to recognize those of the past as their cultural as well as their biological ancestors. People continuously chose to act in similar ways, but they made those choices within certain constraints. Like the rest of us, the Chinese made their own history, but not under conditions of their own choosing.

This book is about those conditions, about the armature of constraints around which the Chinese people, in all their vast variety of environment, experience, and action, lived and, to a very great extent, still live their lives. In it, I invent abstractions — the petty-capitalist mode of production and its patterned interaction with tributary relations of production — which, I contend, render more transparent some of the more apparent contradictions in Chinese life. Important among these are: the simultaneous adeptness of Chinese people in creat-

ing both positional distribution hierarchies and rough-and-tumble market competition; a kinship system that stresses kin ties as fixed, determinate relationships indissolubly linking the living with the dead and the unborn but that also permits an extraordinary pragmatism in the disposal of family members through infanticide, sale, arranged marriage, and obligatory sojourning; popular religious beliefs that deify bureaucratic power but revere quid-pro-quo transactions that establish equality between gods and humans; the existence of relations between women and men which, in all logic, should have rendered women utterly powerless but which have produced instead striking images of and anxieties about female power; the passive unproductivity of state workers in late-imperial China, Taiwan, and the People's Republic of China contrasted with the irrepressible energy of those employed in small private firms.

I stress oppositional tendencies but not the vacuous notions of "tradition" and "modernity" or the inappropriate ones of capitalism and socialism. The antinomies emphasized here have long struck newcomers to China and have been raised by Chinese themselves to the level of philosophy. I return in each chapter to the dialectic between a petty-capitalist and a tributary mode of production, drawing evidence from the history of urbanization and the gendered division of labor, from kinship, from folk ideologies, and from economic development in Taiwan and the People's Republic of China.

This is a book of immodest scope, written from a distant perspective that makes most historians grumpy and many anthropologists tart. I write in this fashion not out of simple ignorance or for lack of sympathy for close-grained concrete analysis. Indeed, I have spent most of my anthropological time in the past twenty years getting to know three wards of Taipei City fairly well, largely through talking to hundreds of their inhabitants about the ordinary matters of life. This experience has been excellent preparation for writing a book about the grand sweep of Chinese culture. The real women and men who have taught me their versions of that culture are a constant reminder that only if I can show that their lives too have been shaped by the constraints and contradictions I hope to delineate does my argument have a chance of being useful.

One of the ways I hope it will be of use is in bringing the increasingly large and sophisticated body of literature on China into closer touch with the rest of social analysis, especially anthropology. Anthropologists pride ourselves on the cross-cultural perspective that enables us — or so we fondly imagine — to avoid some of the moral and scientific parochialism of disciplines that abstract conclusions about "society," "politics," "economics," and the like from a narrow and recent range of human possibilities. But even anthropologists rarely make use of either data or theoretical insight gained from the study of China,<sup>1</sup> although peoples as

few in number as the Trobrianders and the Nuer have influenced our and other disciplines. Recent textbooks summarizing current knowledge rarely refer to matters Chinese for proof of a proposition or as a source of theory to illuminate other problems. Conversely, the study of Chinese society has not been deeply penetrated by the intellectual excitement of the 1960s and 1970s, or even by the safe scholasticism of the 1980s. The unfolding drama of European social historiography — reshaped by feminism, demography, the social psychology of childhood and the family, attention to state autonomy, and a sophisticated neo-marxism — are reflected in Chinese studies, but the compliment is rarely returned.

Both Eurocentrism and Sinocentrism contribute to this lack of mutual influence. We need abstractions and language with sufficient scope to encompass within a unifying theoretical framework the great historical divergences between these two influential centers of human culture. In trying to build such a framework, I begin with the best actually existing tools I can find, those of Marxism.

My approach derives from important traditions in French and American scholarship. French anthropologists such as Maurice Godelier and Claude Meillassoux began to revivify the Marxist strain in the study of nonclass societies during the 1960s and 1970s. Louis Althusser and those who worked his structuralist vein opened new directions in the study of class societies, some of it directed toward China, especially during the Cultural Revolution (a primary stimulus to their thinking). But despite some effort to rethink China's late-imperial society (e.g., Ferenc Tokei 1966), this new Marxism remained stubbornly old Marxist in the categories and historical expectations it brought to contemporary China. This European work, along with that of the Chinese Marxists with whom the French especially hoped to remain in tune has faded, and it inspires little research. These matters are taken up at greater length in Chapter 2.

More influential on my own rethinking of the political and economic conditions that shaped Chinese culture is the work of American historical materialist anthropologists, best exemplified by two men who revolutionized anthropology for many of us: Eric R. Wolf and Sidney W. Mintz. It is primarily through their 1950s work on peasants and complex or class societies that the study of societies like China's were admitted within the anthropological pale. Wolf's and Mintz's interests in history, in political economy, and in the experience of these in peasant life has provided a framework adequate for a burst of new work on nonindustrial contemporary peoples.

At about the same time, Maurice Freedman, writing in a very different tradition, called for the incorporation of China into British social anthropology (1963, 1979). Brilliant as his work is, it has focused the attention of China scholars on kinship as an autonomous entity, as if China were a vast tribal congeries of freely competing kin groups; his efforts to understand the role of class and state institutions have been largely ignored. Eric Wolf's *Sons of the Shaking Earth* (1959), a

1. Recent examples have been Esther N. Goody (1982), David Nugent (1991), Marshall Sahlins (1988), and Francesca Bray (1986).

sociohistorical study of Mesoamerican civilization, might have been a better starting place for a new look at China than the largely African materials on which Freedman's thinking was based. Influenced in part by Wolf and Mintz, and in part by direct return to Marx (especially *Capital III*), fine anthropological work has been accomplished in the tradition of this period by — to cite only two notable examples — Jane Schneider and Peter Schneider (*Culture and Political Economy in Western Sicily* [1976] and Michael Taussig (*The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* [1975])).

An antimaterialist theoretical turn beginning in the late 1970s, coinciding with China's drastic revision of its antimarket policies, appears to have halted most Chinese and Western attempts to use Marxism productively and appropriately in analyzing China. This book may be of use, then, in beginning to formulate for China a set of categories which are Marxist in spirit but freer from the Eurocentrism that has led many analysts into fruitless debates about "how much" capitalism developed indigenously or why it did not develop.

In *Europe and the Peoples without History* (1982), Eric Wolf argues that the world since 1400 has been reshaped by the pressures of a capitalism originating in western Europe. In my view, China, perhaps east Asia as a whole, constitutes an important exception in this process. People of Confucian traditions resisted Europeans long and successfully, took much of the process of economic penetration and even industrialization into their own hands, and are now energetically creating odd-looking "capitalisms" and "socialisms" that are generally predicted to be of the greatest significance for all our futures. Capitalism, at least the capitalism guided by Euro-American domination, now has a rival. Our full knowledge of capitalism and what may replace it depends greatly on a better understanding of the Chinese political economy as it was before Europeans meddled with it. China constitutes the only case of a globally significant political economy (Immanuel Wallerstein would call it a world empire) to have survived the Western imperialist remaking of the world of the past few centuries. The "century of humiliation" under foreign influence, though highly salient to critics of capitalist imperialism, was less influential than is generally believed — as I argue in Chapters 2 and 11. Marxist theorists, strongest in the analysis of classical capitalism, must think new thoughts if they are to deal intelligently with either capitalism itself or this vast and increasingly significant exception to its laws of motion.

A new perspective is pinpointed by Hermann Rebel: "One of the political economist's strongest perceptions has been of people who experience in themselves . . . intersecting articulations of modes of production and are split internally by the double or triple lives they must lead" (1989:131). Classical Marxist models in which one class single-mindedly pursues one set of goals while another class acts on different lines, are almost always insufficient, especially in political economies offering some class mobility. This insufficiency has been dramatically true for Chinese. I identify an abstract, two-tiered class structure characteristic of

Chinese societies in Chapter 2: a person may be a commoner in relation to the state-servitors class but also an owner-operator in a petty-capitalist complex that also includes laborers and producer-merchants. Often, however (and this point cannot be stressed strongly enough), the same people must make hard choices about which mode-of-production logic should guide their actions in a particular case. By the twentieth century, Chinese people had to make choices among four distinguishable modes of production as capitalism and, briefly, socialism, joined the much older options of petty capitalism and the "tributary" mode.

Chinese people have lived for at least a thousand years within the reach of two different political-economic patterns that offered them different and partially contradictory possibilities and limitations. One is the state-managed tributary mode of production for state use, the other the petty-capitalist mode, a system of commodity production by kin corporations. Modes of production are behavioral/ideational systems for transferring surplus wealth from less powerful to more powerful classes. For a thousand years in the late-imperial tributary mode, a class of scholar-officials has transferred surpluses from the various producer classes (peasants, petty capitalists, laborers) to themselves by means of direct extraction as tribute, taxes, corvée, hereditary labor duties, and the like. In the private markets that flourished in China from the Song forward, free producers transferred any remaining surpluses among the commoner classes by means of wage labor and a hierarchical kinship/gender system. China provides the type case of petty capitalism because of its exquisite integration of kinship and gender systems with state control.

Brevity engenders reification: "petty capitalism" and the rest are, of course, abstractions from repetitions of human behavior and from congruences between language and action. Let me expand this somewhat mechanistic sketch to include a clearer specification of the actors on which my argument depends.

Petty capitalists are commodity producers — producers for market more than for use — through firms organized in the idiom of kinship. Household producers rely on the labor of a finely graded spectrum of blood kin, married, adopted, or purchased members, apprentices, and waged labor. They depend on a class culture that assures supplies of reliable labor, materials, credit, and capital. Petty capitalism generates relationships among the commoner classes necessary to their continued existence at a level beyond mere "natural economy." They defend their communities against the avid suction of officials and (more recently) capitalists. Along with commodities, petty capitalists produce and are produced by a deep-rooted and subtly effective resistance, in word and deed, to the tributary purposes of Chinese ruling classes.

The economic activities of petty capitalism are embedded in a dominant tributary mode managed by state officials who put their own requirements for reliable revenues, stable class relations, and continued hegemony above any perceived need for economic expansion. State officials define kinship relations as

relations of production; by maintaining kinship orthodoxy (and, of course, through other means), they regulate labor and set limits to the private accumulation of resources.

The petty-capitalist mode remains subordinate, subsumed within the tributary mode, *because* the kinship/gender system crucial to petty capitalism is defined and maintained principally by the ruling class as an aspect of its hierarchical control of the entire social formation. The kinship/gender system is negotiable as it bears on women. But its principal, patrilineal structures are fixed — supported, in the last instance, by ruling-class power.

Late-imperial China's two modes of production both displayed a secular tendency to grow more sophisticated and complex over the centuries. Official extraction was met with household resistance, endlessly complicating the practices of each. Recent scholarship now offers much evidence that Chinese history owes more to its internal dynamic than to Western influence, including that of capitalism (P. Cohen 1984; Spence 1990). I argue here that the motor of China's history was the petty-capitalist tendency toward accumulation unrelentingly harnessed by tributary might, turned to tributary rather than capitalist purposes. When petty capitalism began to articulate with capitalism, however, the old order was threatened. Indigenous petty capitalists flourished, creating class polarization and misery for many, modest prosperity for some, and great wealth for a very few. Although Chinese who benefited primarily from the tributary mode resisted Western capitalism as long as possible, those who benefited from petty capitalism embraced the new commerce and industry, often in flagrant contravention of ruling-class wishes.

The oldest and probably most influential effects of capitalism on Chinese culture came not from nineteenth- and twentieth-century European and Japanese incursions on China's soil. They came as Western merchant adventurers encountered Chinese merchant adventurers in southeast Asia. In the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, Chinese petty capitalists founded a discreet economic empire of permanent colonists and shuttling sojourners who channeled wealth from "the Nanyang" and played an incalculably significant role in the fortunes of most Pacific nations. This shadowy overseas kingdom, with its flow of family tribute and cross-cutting investments, has repeatedly forced China's solipsistic rulers to squint in puzzled irritation at the world beyond the center of the world. Overseas Chinese, whose tributary experience is limited to subjection to foreign imperialism, the hermetic needs of family business, and tribute-extorting gangsterism, act out the submerged political implications of petty capitalist vision and continue to play an ever-increasing role in China's destiny.

Because petty capitalism never attained hegemony in the Chinese system, the primary capitalist contradiction between capital and labor was subordinated to other, more insistent contradictions, notably that between state and household economies. Money did not come to wear the fiendish face that the people of Eu-

rope's colonies (Taussig 1975) and working class could sometimes see. The pursuit of profit was idealized in common life as a virtue, and the use of money as capital — invested at a profit — was sanctified in popular religion. During the decades following the 1949 revolution, the operation of petty capitalism, with all its cultural complexity, was systematically restricted in the interests of building a new state mode. Chinese socialism began with a commitment to the socialist ideal of egalitarian abundance, to a growth-oriented and ultimately classless society. With the privatizations of the 1980s, petty capitalism increasingly forced socialist institutions into apparently tributary molds. In Taiwan an alliance of petty and proper capitalists has become a formidable opponent of a still-formidable system of state production. More precision in distinguishing among tributary, petty-capitalist, and capitalist modes of production is found in Chapter 2.

Chinese culture is immensely sophisticated. It is also riven by oppositions, dualities, wasteful struggle, and a division of social labor easily disequilibrated; the national ideal of a "great harmony" is an act of sublime wishful thinking. The Chinese imperial official, like his Chinese Communist and Guomindang counterparts, had nightmares of *luan*, of social chaos. After a dynastic upheaval or some other epochal event, Chinese people settled back as a peaceable citizenry with a counterintuitive quantum of self-esteem. In individuals and in collectivities, vigorous support of some grand moral program was abruptly succeeded by apparently equally vigorous support for something entirely different. The susceptibility of the Chinese to mass enthusiasm for alternating models of right living has been vividly exemplified over the forty years since the 1949 revolution in the early stages of land reform, in the Great Leap, in the Cultural Revolution, and in the intervening periods of reaction. Neither China watchers nor the Chinese themselves predicted or anticipated such vast oscillations, and their existence remains a puzzle that makes us who study China cautious of prognostication. An important motivation for this book has been my puzzlement about this high degree of moral lability.

Chinese culture offers other stimulating puzzles. One of these is the dangerous persistence of the extraordinary strength of patriarchy. Taiping rebels, May Fourth schoolgirls, half a century of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zidong-thought, and the formidable counterexamples of their own mothers have had little influence on the profound sexism of most Chinese. Parents have been prosecuted lately in Taiwan for selling a daughter into prostitution (*China Post* 1992); alarming reports of female infanticide and the sale of women to be workers, prostitutes, and "brides" (WuDunn 1991) show that the situation is worsening under a revived petty capitalism in China. That such treatment of women is inhumane goes without saying; further, low status for women has been an important factor in the sustaining of a high birth rate, which China simply cannot afford. A historical-materialist explanation of China's extreme patriarchy, with its byproduct of rapid population growth, is offered in Chapter 3.

China's regional variation has become a recurring theme in research of the past two decades. Was Chinese regionalism rooted in an ineluctable logic of transport costs, as such analysts as G. William Skinner (1964, 1965a, 1965b) and Evelyn Sakakida Rawski (1972) have argued? Was it not at least as much the consequence of the multiple possibilities and difficulties of living in two contradictory modes of production? This question is examined in Chapter 4.

The presence of powerful lineage organizations in an old and complex class society is problematic in a world where states generally commandeer the social power that kinship exercises in classless, stateless systems. In Chapters 5, 6, and 7, I examine Chinese kinship as a system in part imposed by state administrative imperatives and in part a response to commodity production. In doing so, one can account systematically for some of the variations in household form, pattern of lineage distribution, and dowry/brideprice exchanges.

Chapters 8 and 9 explore popular ideologies — those centering on power and class placement and on gender. When read carefully, Chinese folk ritual and belief reveal much about the complications petty capitalism engenders in an apparently hierarchical cosmos, and about the skeptical and disaffected views of women in what should be a crushingly convincing patriarchy.

Chapters 10 and 11 undertake to compare economic development in Taiwan and the People's Republic of China from the point of view of their different applications of the double mode of production, along with their differential insertion into world capitalism. In Taiwan, many events of recent history have been conducive to the expansion of an indigenous petty capitalism that compensates for Guomintang state-sector failures; in China, misanalysis of that mode has resulted in the expression of some of the society's worst characteristics and obliged the socialist mode to attempt things for which it is as yet ill suited. The contrast enables us to see clearly the political limitations of the world view the petty-capitalist mode encourages, along with its more positive features. The puzzle of why the wicked Guomintang succeeded while the virtuous Communists did not will seem a puzzle only, perhaps, to those who accept my adjectives. But for those few, perhaps, Chapter 11 will provide some cheap intellectual solace for the great leftist disappointment of mid-century.

My interpretation of Chinese culture as the slowly shifting outcome of the same people's living through two different modes of production is suggestive rather than definitive. I have supported the argument with some quantitative data, but mostly with what I hope are appropriate examples and anecdotes. Some come from years of observation and conversation in Chinese places, from Chinese working-class people. Much evidence comes from persons outside the Chinese cultural hegemony — foreigners or Chinese social scientists. I emphasize their views because my goal is not to synthesize an internalist understanding of Chinese political economy, but to provide a synthesis that comprehends and then transcends the limitations of its ideology. I do so too because I fear drowning in

the great sea of ink which native historians have poured forth for reasons very different from my own. It would be impossible to deal with all the exceptions and anomalies which that literature presents. As the epigraph to this chapter suggests, "unreasonable exceptions may be taken to any kind or degree of completeness" (Arthur H. Smith 1965:133). This book contains no hedgehog-skin collars or golden manure forks.

I have turned frequently to "outsider" sources also because Chinese literati documents are silent on so many key issues. Women and the money-grubbing lives of ordinary commodity producers are nearly invisible in the Chinese record, except when they invented and successfully propagated cultural variants sufficiently threatening to attract literati attention. Important work on "precapitalist" petty capitalists is being done, but matters I consider crucial are not well documented.

Jonathan Spence, connoisseur of Chinese complexity, observes that "no one is easy to understand. And the more blurred and multifaceted our perceptions of China become, the closer we may be to that most elusive thing: the truth" (1990:14). The humane tradition that inspires such a remark offers little guidance to those of us who hope (against much evidence!) that reason may yet redress age-old cruelties. My own approach to apprehending China is better epitomized by another masterly student of great civilizations, Eric Wolf:

In social formations that deploy labor through relations glossed as kinship, people are assigned to networks or bodies of kin that are distinguished by criteria of gender, distinct substances or essences of descent, connections with the dead, differential distributions of myths, rituals, and emblems. Tributary formations hierarchize these criteria and set up distinct social strata, each stratum marked by a distinctive inner substance that also defines its positions and privileges in society. Capitalist formations peel the individual out of encompassing ascriptive bodies and install people as separate actors, free to exchange, truck, or barter in the market, as well as in other provinces of life. The three modes of categorizing social actors, moreover, imply quite different relations to "nature" and cosmos. (1990:593)

Kinship, tributary ruling/commoner classes, and market relations have all been salient in Chinese lives for a millennium. To see how these lives are lived, and to take the necessary step of linking them with our own, we must frame Wolf's categories so that they are both Chinese and universal.

No matter what the Chinese wish to do with their future, they must first come to terms with their past. Chinese thinkers are amply alert at present to the threatening legacy of tributary "feudalism" (Zhang 1994:128). Their heritage of petty capitalism has been less clearly considered. Petty capitalism exploits in two ways: through the wage relation, which Chinese socialists understand and have struggled to eradicate, and through the kinship/gender system, which many Chinese

see as their only haven in a dangerous world. The kinship/gender system is not a natural, unconstructed reality. Many people are damaged by it, as thoughtful Chinese have been aware for centuries. Its convenience for Chinese states, however, has ensured the survival of some of its worst aspects into the present. To eradicate petty capitalism, Chinese people would need to change the laws and obligations that make it possible to treat kin like commodities. The commoditization of women and the young harms them and society and puts us all in demographic peril.

But petty capitalism has positive features when compared with the tributary face of Chinese culture. It is economically productive, a result that Chinese all agree they surely need. It has egalitarian tendencies, which most Chinese, most of the time, would like to foster. Sorting out which parts of their political-economic inheritance will be preserved, and which left behind, will require distinguishing clearly among tributary "feudalism," socialism, capitalism, and petty capitalism. Intellectual distinctions, themselves drawn from the experience of present life, are only a second step to change, however. For the third step, choosing among these sometimes deadly heirlooms, people must take risks. Exempt from these risks, foreigners may analyze and suggest, but only Chinese can act.

## 2

### The Tributary and Petty-Capitalist Modes of Production

They do not grudge tending the rice in the spring  
But fear the payment of taxes in the autumn.  
The evil officials act like sparrows or rats,  
And the thieving clerks like locusts or caterpillars.  
They take extra with their enlarged measures,  
They profit by accepting strings of cash at a discount.

People cannot avoid being flogged to make them pay up,  
And are further oppressed with private debts.

— Fan Chengta, Song scholar

Chinese economies have been intensively studied since east Asian economic development began to challenge Euro-American dominance during the 1970s. According to Dwight H. Perkins, this growth in the east Asian region cannot be easily accounted for. Attempts to explain the phenomenon in terms of the policies pursued (export-led growth versus import substitution) or the economic system employed (laissez-faire capitalism versus socialism) have all foundered on the unavoidable fact that the rapid growth has occurred under a wide variety of economic systems governed by very different policies. What these rapid developers do have in common, most aver, is a historical or cultural heritage (1981:360). Others have made similar arguments: for South Korea (Mason and Kim 1979-1981; Koo 1981), for Japan (Morishima 1982), and for the "Neo-Confucian" systems on China's periphery as a group (e.g. Redding 1990).

These conclusions have been turned on China proper as well, with Ramon Myers (1980) arguing that its cultural characteristics make China a special case that sheds little light on development elsewhere. Perkins observes a new academic interest in "positive elements" in China's economic heritage (1981:361) which

we may assume will contribute to its future development as they have to those of the other sinitic systems.

What then is the "Chinese heritage" that may be such an advantage in economic development? Why has it not worked as well in the People's Republic of China as in the other sinitic systems? Can we specify the structure of these systems to learn if east Asians are creating fundamentally different and indigenous political economies in the age of capitalism?

The attempts to identify a Chinese heritage are generally unsatisfying, consisting of laundry lists of traits after the fashion of nineteenth-century anthropology. Hard work, respect for education, experience with complex organizations — the list could be extended indefinitely. But which traits are actually relevant? Traits that at one time were viewed as obstacles to development, such as kinship ties and the small scale of business organization (K. T. Li 1976:314–15) have come to be seen in a more positive light, as David Buck now views lineage corporations (1984:463) and as some Japanese authors have long seen small businesses (Shinohara 1962:23–25; Kiyonari 1983). But such lists remain lists, not the set of systematically related ideas that constitute theory.

Neoclassical analyses of Chinese economic history and development are particularly unsatisfying in ways that are dealt with in detail in Chapter 4. In this chapter, I expand on the Marxist interpretation already outlined in Chapter 1, hoping to show both how China can be illuminated by properly grounded application of its concepts, and how Marxist thought can flexibly and authentically meet the challenge of recent history. I briefly criticize Marxist attempts to apply classical theory to China, examine the mid-century debates about modes of production — and then turn to a fuller description of China's tributary and petty-capitalist modes. These having been expanded beyond the outline in Chapter 1, I show the implications of this dual system for class analysis and return to the distinction between petty capitalism and capitalism proper.

The Marxist paradigm of historical change in which societies evolve, struggling and resynthesizing, from primitive communism through ancient, slave, feudal, and capitalist societies to socialism is only with difficulty applied to China. Its rejection by most Western sinologists is not due solely to political antipathy; even scholars sympathetic to Marxism have been unwilling to force history into these categories (e.g. Huang 1985), while others have flirted briefly with, and then abandoned them (e.g. Ho P'ing-ti 1954). Stalinist-Marxist analyses of China written during the middle of this century now often seem Eurocentric and sociologically barren even to those who wrote them.

In the 1960s and 1970s, enthusiasms for China's socialist experiment and for retooling Marxism inspired important world-systems-theory studies of China (e.g. Moulder 1977; contributions by Winckler, Basu, and Kraus in Goldfrank 1979; So 1986). Proponents of the world-systems paradigm, however, failed to

give sufficient attention to the precise nature of the Chinese social formation as it first confronted capitalism. In this, they were not unusual; the burden of later scholarly critique of such work was that Marxists treated capitalism as a juggernaut that nullified all that had gone before (Sahlins 1981).

By the late 1970s, Marxist failures to explain complex phenomena through a simple ideological-superstructure-is-epiphenomenal-to-material-base analysis precipitated a wave of criticism of mechanical economism. Rather than seeking more refined understandings of noncapitalist political economies and of their persistence past the moment of capitalist contact, many concluded that material life was no more important than any other aspect of human existence.

A particularly apt example of this unfortunate theoretical detour is exemplified in Andrea Sankar's dissertation, "The Evolution of the Sisterhood in Traditional Chinese Society: From Village Girls' Houses to Chai T'angs in Hong Kong" (1978). Alive with the voices of women silkworkers and servants, this study downplays the influence in the Guangdong silk boom of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on what Marxists see as the key element in capitalism — wage labor in industrial production. Instead, Sankar stresses the variability of labor circumstances in the delta. Her arguments assume that a Marxist analysis of the production complex she so effectively describes would define it as capitalist. Because proletarian factory labor demonstrably did not create the unusual local patterns of female labor, she makes a characteristic antimaterialist leap. "The economic" (i.e. capitalism) did not determine the social outcome; therefore "culture" did. This strips to its osteoporotic bones the anthropological argument that came to dominate the 1980s: if the economy does not work in a simplistically conceived capitalist fashion, then the economic should not be "privileged" in our explanations.

At the same time, Sankar describes in wonderful detail the importance of what I call petty capitalism in Guangdong's early industrialization. Silk thread was made by daughters at home and for neighbors in small workshops as well as in capitalist steam filatures. Women and men worked side by side in household enterprises dependent on the complex ecology of fish, mulberry, and silkworm culture (Sankar 1978:65–66). Ten to 20 percent of households had hand-powered reels with which they produced "large quantities of raw silk for local and Indian consumption (69–70). Women preferred to work in household production sites "because working conditions were more pleasant and compatible and work more profitable" (72), although much of the work women did in their own parents' homes contributed directly the household income. A silk reeler who also picked mulberry leaves might add half again as much to the yearly family income (74). Production was connected to wider economic networks not only through capitalist wholesaling and export but also through many and varied petty-capitalist undertakings. In one striking example, spinsters invested savings in trading ex-

peditions of women broker-peddlers who sometimes traveled as far as southeast Asia (120).

Although this was classical petty capitalism, its output was not small. Sankar writes, "In 1925 at the height of the silk boom women in the domestic sector and in the old-fashioned foot powered filatures produced twice as much silk thread as the steam filatures" (78). She points out that "in the early twentieth century the wealth created by silk production was so great that Shun-te capital underwrote 80 percent of the banks in Canton, and earlier it paid for 14 percent of the costs to put down the Red Turban Revolt" (64-65).

This is strong evidence for the political-economic complexity that underpinned the unusual behavior of delta women. In Sankar's study, however, that evidence lacks a frame that would allow for the systematic exploration of its noncapitalist elements. Sankar, like so many others, was left leaning on the crutch of "culture." An appropriate frame can be effectively supplied by a historical materialism that explores the interaction of modes of production in a complex society. Subtle but not radical reconstruction can easily reshape this frame to fit the Chinese of the late empire, the Republic, Taiwan, and the People's Republic of China.

Terry Eagleton has forcefully restated the argument for a materialist analysis in contemporary social theory:

For there is surely no doubt that [material production] is what the vast majority of men and women throughout history have spent their time engaged on. A socialist is just someone who is unable to get over his or her astonishment that most people who have lived and died have spent lives of wretched, fruitless, unremitting toil. . . . The sheer struggle for material survival and reproduction, in conditions of real or artificially induced scarcity, has tied up such enormous resources of human energy that we would surely expect to find its traces inscribed in the rest of what we do. Material production, then, is "primary" in the sense that it forms the major narrative of history to date; but it is primary also in the sense that without *this* particular narrative, no other story would ever get off the ground. Such production is the precondition of the whole of our thought. (1991:82-83)

Coming to an appropriate understanding of the role of various forms of production in Chinese life takes logical priority over other styles of investigation.

#### THEORIES OF MODES OF PRODUCTION

A mode of production is "the mechanism which regulates the activity of human beings in producing what they need to sustain life" (Stevens 1983:4), or, in Marx's words,

The specific economic form, in which unpaid surplus labor is pumped out of direct producers. . . . [This] determines the relationship of rulers and ruled, as it grows directly out of production itself and reacts back on it as a determinant. On this . . . is based the entire configuration of the economic community arising from the actual relations of production and hence also its specific political form. It is in each case the direct relationship of the owners of the conditions of production to the immediate producers . . . in which we find the innermost secret, the hidden basis of the entire social edifice (1981, 3:927).

Marx used the terms "social formation" and "mode of production" in several, sometimes overlapping ways.<sup>1</sup> Dominique Legros et al.'s definition of a "mode of production" as a "whole composed of (1) an economic base [both technical and social] and (2) the superstructural apparatuses required for the replication over time of the economic base (1979:248) makes too much of the heuristic distinction between "base" and "superstructure"; a view of modes of production with a greater emphasis on the mutual influences of material, social, and ideological elements is found in Susan Himmelwert (1983). Legros et al. relate the mode of production to the wider entity, the "social formation," which is "a geopolitical entity" seen as "a complex whole which may be composed of several modes of production" (1979:248). A definition by Antony Cutler et al. of a social formation as "a set of relations of production together with the economic, political, and cultural forms in which their conditions of existence are secured" comes usefully close to the traditional anthropological usage of "a culture" (1977).

A social formation may consist of more than one mode of production. Indeed, many social formations do so consist; some would argue that they must (Legros et al. 1979). In every known class society, kin groupings within which joint production and generalized reciprocity govern economic relations coexist with other patterns of economic relations with nonkin (Wolpe 1980; Foster-Carter 1978; Rudra 1988). When we analyze articulated modes of production, we observe a "combination of distinct but uncomfortably related processes" (Bloch 1983:159). Although the dominant class of the dominant mode has great power, class distinctions within the subordinate mode create both parallel and contradictory forces that shape the cultural hegemony.

Have not generations of Marxists, especially Chinese ones, already accomplished the task of anatomizing Chinese modes of production? With respect, and with admiration for the powerful insights already achieved, I submit that they have not.

This statement sounds curious, even impertinent, for the Chinese revolution was inspired by Marxism and impelled by a Marxist class analysis of Chinese so-

1. I refer the interested reader to the excellent summary of the semantics of these phrases to Legros, Hunderfund, and Shapiro 1979:243-49, and to the entry on "Modes of Production" in Bottomore 1983.

ciety. After the revolution, Chinese historians explored "sprouts of capitalism" in China's indigenous commercialization.<sup>2</sup> Such analyses, although often of great interest for the historical complexities they reveal, differ from my own in that, first, they employ mode-of-production categories taken directly from Marx's description of European circumstances, with only limited attempts to adapt these to China's historical particularities. Second, they do not attempt to integrate kinship relations and gender roles into the process of social reproduction of the capitalist mode they describe. Japanese Marxist scholarship, to which I have only limited access, also appears to hesitate to tamper with classical categories of modes of production. In a useful summary by Linda Grove and Joseph W. Eshrick, they are criticized for ignoring European protoindustrialization literature (1980). Arif Dirlik has called for reconceptualization of the problem of capitalist-like tendencies in Chinese economic history but suggests no solutions (1982).

Marx himself was not very knowledgeable about China, his writings indicate, although he followed the forcible intrusion of imperialism there with interest (Torr 1951; Marx 1968). He appears to have known little about the empire's economic complexity and often lumped China with India (e.g. Marx 1968:333).

Marx (and Engels) placed China, along with all the other non-European ancient empires, in a broadly sketched Asiatic mode of production (1965), and the Asiatic mode continues to inspire political and scholarly debate.<sup>3</sup> The original formulation of the Asiatic mode implies economic and social equilibrium so complete that only external forces could impel change. As this view suggested that societies such as China's were unable to make their own revolutions without preliminary imperialist intervention — putting imperialism in a positive light — Stalin prohibited further explorations into the Asiatic mode, defining all pre-capitalist state-level formations as ancient, slave, or feudal modes of production. Chinese Marxists inherited this position.

The Asiatic mode is defined by its powerful state that owns all productive resources, by the absence of private property, and by strong village communes in

2. Sprouts-of-capitalism research is retrospectively explored in Myers 1976; Wakeman 1980; Fu Yiling 1980; and Fu Zhufu 1981; see also Kishimoto-Nakayama 1984 and Philip Huang 1985:11–12. For a useful compendium of some of the original 1950s sprouts research, see the unauthored [n.a. in my sources] *Zhongguo zibenzhuyi mengya wenti taolun ji* (Collected discussions of the problem of China's sprouts of capitalism) 1987 [1959]; and also Fu Yiling's *Ming-qing shidai shangren yu shangye ziben* [Merchants and merchant capital in the Ming/Qing period] (1986 [1955]); and also Peng Zheyi (P'eng Tse-i) 1987. Peng's work is referred to at length in Rowe 1984:134.

3. See Hobsbawm's Introduction in Marx 1965; Tokei 1966; Garaudy 1969; Kahn and Llobera 1981; Brook 1989. Brook's collection of 1980s essays by Chinese scholars on the Asiatic mode of production is of considerable interest for our understanding both of history and of the development of Marxist thought in China. For the most part, however, the views expressed are subject to the same criticisms of sprouts-of-capitalism research expressed above.

which the state, in Maurice Bloch's words, halts "the disruptive process of class formation" (1983:40). Marx's emphasis on the economic role of Chinese states is worth attending to. Still, his Asiatic rubric omits much of importance in recent Chinas, where markets, private property, and classes are highly visible. Nor, as we now know, was Marx's image of an unchanging China accurate. In contrast with the dramatic alterations he associated with the capitalist Opium Wars, Marx saw China, in an ugly metaphor, as utterly stagnant, "a giant empire . . . vegetating in the teeth of time" (Marx 1968:323). Such a position, from our vantage, is untenable.

Marx misread the significance of China's indigenous commerce in two ways. First, he classed it with "natural economies" in which subsistence producers locally trade small quantities of surplus goods as a convenience rather than for profit (Marx 1977, 1:911). Although natural economies can be found at some times and places in the Chinese world, in others something much more dynamic emerged. Second, he did not see Chinese petty production as dependent on the exploitation of waged labor (1981:938–43); it therefore lacked the mechanism for accumulation that gives capitalism its force.

Marx frequently mentions production based mainly on household labor as of no importance in the emergence of capitalism (especially 1981, 3, chap. 20). This idea remains contentious among scholars.<sup>4</sup> The significance of small-scale commercial producers was debated at length, but inconclusively, in a collection of essays edited by Rodney Hilton titled *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism* (1976). It was clear from this landmark debate that for Marx, and Marxists in mid-century, small owner-operated production was considered historically important but unable to stand as a mode of production independent of a feudal ruling class. The possibility of articulated subordinate and dominant modes in a single formation remained outside this debate.<sup>5</sup> These scholars also generally, with Marx, expected that such forms of production would disappear with the spread of industrial capitalism. Indeed, the great majority of work on household production assumes that the households exist within the orbit of capitalism as a dominant mode. Scholars have overlooked the Chinese case, in which, especially prior to 1800, commodity production was enormous but capitalism could hardly be considered a factor.

4. Maurice Dobb spoke in 1946 for an important role for "petty-mode" producers in creating the preconditions of English capitalism; Takahashi Kohachiro noted in 1952 that Japanese scholars had already come to similar conclusions about Japan (1976:89n, and passim).

5. A. V. Chayanov's 1925 analysis of a domestic mode of production (1986) has been applied to the Chinese case, generally in passing, by many scholars (e.g. Philip Huang, 1990:5–10). Susan Greenhalgh applies it to Taiwan petty-capitalist firms, with good effect (1985b). Although it has considerable power, Chayanov's approach contains a fatal flaw. To argue that peasant economies are motivated principally by family cycles and dependency ratios is to take the structure of patrilineal extended families as an assumption. In China, at least, that structure was not an irreducible given but a construct largely of the state, as James P. McGough sketches (1984) and as I argue in Chapters 3 and 5.

Recent work by anthropologists has shown that the persistence or reinvention of petty commodity production on the fringes of capitalist production is extremely common.<sup>6</sup> Many other authors prefer to remain outside the Marxist pale by labeling this complex the informal sector (e.g. Hart 1992). Most would concur with James Wessman, who categorizes "petty" and "agrarian" capitalism along with mercantile, industrial, and monopoly capitalism as "subtypes of the capitalist mode." In the petty subtype, "agents in [the petty mode] sell in order to buy, not vice versa. In the economic shorthand used by Marx, their transactions are of this type: C-M-C' (a commodity is exchanged for money, which is then used to buy another commodity). A capitalist, on the other hand, is engaged in transactions of this type: M-C-M' (money is advanced for a commodity, which is then sold for a profit)" (1981:245-46). The Chinese case, in which petty capitalism long predated the capitalist mode, is paradoxical. Transactions of the M-C-M' (capitalist) type were extremely common, as enormous indigenous commodity production attests. It is plain, however, that the resulting accumulations of wealth did not effect a transition to capitalism.

The debate over petty commodity production was given new importance by European scholars interested in the effects of household production on population growth rates. Unlike analysts in Hilton's collection, analysts of protoindustrialism (Mendels 1972, 1981; Kriedte et al. 1982, 1993) link petty production with kinship relations and demographic outcomes. With more effective inclusion of gender issues (e.g. Collins 1991; Lem 1991), students of petty production have begun to grasp the potential coherence of the petty mode.

Not all forms of petty production take the same historical trajectory. As all agree, these are subordinate forms, guided by political-economic context as well as by inherent capitalist-like tendencies. China's unitary state constructed its subjects' gender and kinship relations directly, unmediated by church, caste, or other obscurantist mechanisms. And so the Chinese petty-capitalist mode of production emerged as a clearer opponent to state and ruling-class power, to its tributary mode, than did similar patterns in other parts of the world.

#### THE CHINESE TRIBUTARY MODE OF PRODUCTION (TMP)

All precapitalist, class-organized social formations can be combined into a single generic TMP so that the term becomes applicable, at a high level of generality, to the whole range of ancient agrarian states and feudal systems (Amin 1972; E. Wolf 1982). Eric Wolf defines a TMP as one in which "the primary producer . . . is

6. See, for example, Kahn 1978, 1982; Littlefield 1978; Cook 1982, 1985; Littlefield and Reynolds 1990; Binford and Cook 1991.

allowed access to the means of production while tribute is exacted from him by political or military means" (1982:79-80). It specifies a nonmarket mechanism of surplus extraction in the dominant mode, while leaving open the possibility of additional, subordinate mechanisms based on private ownership and free labor. Such usage also assumes a social dynamic: in tributary modes of production, direct producers and state officials confront each other as antagonistically as laborers confront their employers under capitalism (Currie 1982:16). China's late-imperial TMP engaged officials in the direct extraction of tribute, in the direct monopoly production of goods and services for its own use and for sale, and in myriad attempts to contain, manipulate, and benefit from private markets.

In this outline of China's tributary mode, I emphasize the economic functions of officials. These have been obscured in two ways. First, some analysts applying modern standards assume that the state was not able to control the late-imperial economy effectively (Feuerwerker 1984:298-305), that its economic role was thus not great. This view seems untenable. China's basic product was grain, and from the extraction of taxes in kind and of relief supplies, mid-Qing officials controlled perhaps 20 percent of all grain consumed (estimated from L. Li 1982:697-98; Will 1990). The state held vast amounts of arable land as well. In the early Qing, twenty million of China's seven hundred and forty million *mu* (6.6 *mu* = one acre) were distributed by the court (Philip Huang 1985:87), enough to give officials enormous economic power in addition to the administrative, military, and ideological might they also wielded.

Second, the economic activities of officials are slighted by those who take extreme culturalist positions. Some see the Chinese state — as Clifford Geertz perceives the Balinese (1980) — as an administrative end in itself, with a Foucauldian fixation on power and ideological expression outweighing material considerations. Albert Feuerwerker writes of administrators' "unwitting intervention (e.g. through the collection of taxes)" [my emphasis] in the economy (1984:297). Although Chinese officials may have given priority, at times, to the cosmological order-creating aspect of their duties, they were certainly not blind to the need of the government for cash (Zelin 1987:308; Dodgen 1991:51; Lin Man-houng 1991).

Both commoners and officials, the two great tributary classes, can be stratified in a variety of ways — by wealth, consumption patterns, social esteem, and so forth. Hereditary state miners were easily distinguishable from academics of the "Forest of Pencils," county magistrates, and the magistrates' bullying runners, though all were state servants; rich pawnshop owners were different in important ways from owner-operator farmers or artisans and from hired laborers, though all were commoners. Those who served the state in commoner-like manual positions rather than in bureaucratic managerial ones are well exemplified by such low-ranking beneficiaries of tributary employment as soldiers, yamen-runners, domestic staff, innkeepers, and communications workers, who made govern-

ment possible. Foreign travelers in China were especially likely to record observations about the networks of inns and residences that housed officials on their travels and were staffed by servitors of many descriptions. Some — lesser innkeepers, for example — were merely impressed into official service on an occasional basis. Others were permanent state employees. One of the earliest descriptions we have of this system was written by the Portuguese Gaspar da Cruz as he traveled to negotiate for the release of his compatriots, imprisoned in southeast China in 1575:

When the [officials] are dispatched at the Court with offices for the provinces where they go to govern, they depart carrying nothing of their own more than the apparel they are to wear, and some few servants to serve them, even when they have no offices, neither need they carry any provision for the journey, nor carriage or shipping at their own charge; for through all the ways where he goeth are provision as well of shipping as of necessary carriage, and necessary food for all the King's officers, which are provided of the royal rents.

In all the cities and great towns, the King hath many good and noble houses for the [officials] both great and small to lodge in (as also all those who by any means are the King's), which houses have sufficient rents for the maintenance of every person that shall dwell in the house, according to his degree. And that which is to be given to every one for his expences is already limited. Wherefore he that may lodge there being come, the officer of the house cometh to him, and asketh him if he will have his ordinary in money, or in things necessary for provision . . . , flesh, fish, ducks, or hens, or what he will. And any [official] that doth lodge there, may command the host of the house to be whipped, if he serve him not to his will. And if any [official] will go to lodge at the house of any acquaintance of his, he taketh the money, which the inferior [officials] do also sometimes, either to spare some money, or to be merry at their wills more freely. . . .

Along the road at every league, and at every two leagues, are houses which only have beds and chairs for the travellers to rest and ease themselves. And some . . . give wine to the guests; others give nothing but *cha*, which is water. . . .

After the [officials] come to the city where they are to be resident and execute their offices, they find the houses where they are to lodge; and according as their offices are great or small, so they find their houses greater or smaller. In these houses they find all the servants necessary, scribes, porters, and all other ministers needfull for their office. For these are continually in the houses, for to minister at all times to all the officers of the houses in which they serve. And every officer according to his house and person hath his provision necessary for his food, clothing and shoes (limited so that it sufficeth him well) which is paid to him without fail, at the beginning and end of every

month. When the [officials] are old . . . , they are lodged in their native places or where they will, and the King alloweth them every month so much according to their quality for their maintenance till they die . . .

All the porters, serjeants, scribes, executioners, and all the other ministers whom there are in each house of the [officials], have their own ample ordinaries which are paid them very punctually each month. (Boxer 1953:163–66)

The Abbé Huc, traveling in the mid-nineteenth century, was struck by the luxuriousness of accommodations for itinerant officials, especially when compared with those available privately (1970, 1:23). In 1612, almost 12 percent of Fujian's Putian county's taxes were disbursed for

- a) regular items, for which the local government had established twenty funds: receiving high officials, treating examination graduates, repairs to the yamen buildings, street lights, costumes of officials, clothes for orphans, etc. and
- b) official expenditures of an irregular nature: common portage and service personnel, stationery, fuel, candles, firewood, and rice for investigating officials, banquets at the inauguration of new officials, firewood and oil for official guests, food for visiting investigators of detained criminals, scholarships and travel expenses for examination candidates, etc. (Vermeer 1990b:157–58)

Lin Renchuan informs us of the enormous expenses paid by the Maritime Trade Supervisorate of Fujian for the entertainment of tribute envoys in 1439:

According to the report by the Investigation Censor of Fukien, Ch'eng Kui: "The tribute envoys from the Ryukyu isles all stop over in Fuchou. The costs of the reception of the guests are extravagant. Last time the interpreters Lin Hui and Cheng Chang took with them more than 200 sailors. Except for their daily ration of rice, other necessities, such as tea, salt, soy-sauce are provided through the *li-chia* system. . . . During this last half year more than 796,900 pieces of copper coinage have already been used" (1990:174–75).

China's present government continues this Ming/Qing pattern; the most important question asked of an official traveler at present as in the past is "What's your (stipend) standard?" — not a Communist invention, as it turns out.

Among the state's servants, holders of higher academic degrees who served in officialdom constituted a ruling class. Scholar-officials, chosen since the Song by imperial appointment from among those who successfully passed competitive examinations, were the most unlikely of agrarian state elites. Heredity, strictly defined, did not channel men into these exalted ranks. Any man with literary ability and respectable antecedents might offer himself on the market for talent established in the commercially minded Song.

Upper scholars, who managed the social production of tribute and its disbursement for social purposes and their own support, ruled China; even imper-

ial dictates passed through this highly class-conscious social filter. Although both upper and lower scholars formed an honored, privileged elite, distinguished from ordinary men (see Van der Sprenkel 1962:51), exempt from conscription, corporal punishment, and corvée, lower scholars were treated less gingerly in lawsuits and punishments. Upper scholars found it easier to avoid or minimize taxation and to share public revenue. Government regulations distinguished between the forms of marriage, funeral, and sacrificial ceremonies allowed upper scholars' families and those enjoined on lower scholars and commoners (Chang Chung-li 1955:7-8, 35-40). One investigator classes the lower scholars as "scholar-commoners" (Ho P'ing-ti 1962:35). China's fundamental class distinction is made graphic on this book's jacket: rulers differed from commoners as if they were separate biological phyla.

Transfers from commoners to officials in the form of taxes, corvée labor, and other exactions from *nong*, or agriculturalists,<sup>7</sup> have been explored by many scholars; they are the obvious sources of state revenue, official perquisites, and peasant perceptions of exploitation. Officials taxed the owners of property, upheld land contracts, created or improved arable land by building irrigation works or reclaiming wasteland, allocated such new land and land left vacant after the frequent catastrophes of the era, confiscated property from criminals, seized or purchased land for roads, cities, and city walls, and performed rituals that organized agricultural production. The historically minded Chinese were well aware too that these officials, in the name of the emperor, had many times in the past entirely restructured the agrarian economy, instigated mass migrations, and always claimed the right to determine the relationships between people and land.

By late-imperial times, heads of agricultural households were ideally owner-operators of small farms producing for their own frugal subsistence and to meet the officials' demands for taxes and corvée labor. Recent research emphasizes the late-imperial tendency for land tenure to move to private smallholdings rather than to feudal manorial and other forms of large-scale tenure (Elvin 1973; Marks 1984; Philip Huang 1985). Agriculturalists were exhorted to produce enough for both taxes and subsistence and to consume frugally so that their surplus would be large (Hsiao Kung-chuan 1960:188-89). To assist them, officials managed and improved irrigation systems, roads, and canals and maintained substantial reserves of grain (L. Li 1982:689, 694-99; Will 1990) to alleviate famine for a population apparently not expected to be able to retain sufficient reserves to survive economic shortfalls.

7. "Nong" is best rendered as "agriculturalist" rather than "peasant" or "farmer," because in general anthropological usage (following E. Wolf 1966:2) these latter terms imply political-economic contexts — a precapitalist social formation for "peasant," and a capitalist one for "farmer" — whereas it is my intention here to argue for a more precise characterization of the Chinese case than the residual "precapitalist" category.

Although officials sometimes attempted to increase productivity through the dissemination of agricultural innovations, they aimed for a stable or static economy (R. Huang 1969:77, 112; 1974:229). Intentionally or not, Qing China reached a plateau of agricultural involution (Elvin 1973) — population expansion paralleling production expansion, with no growth in per-capita income. In consequence, officials could increase their share of the exploitable agricultural surplus only by taxing more efficiently or by gaining rights over more taxable households — perhaps by rising in rank or by expanding the territory they oversaw. The officials' concern for political control over persons and territory was firmly rooted in their economic interest, which sometimes overrode all other considerations; people sometimes had to sell their children to pay taxes to these officials (Waltner 1990:83).

As well as accumulating agricultural surpluses, officials as a class also controlled large industrial and commercial enterprises, acquiring products and resources needed for public use — salt, armaments, porcelains for imperial use, bricks for a city wall — through nonmarket mechanisms such as state factories, franchises, and monopolies. The enormous salt monopoly, a mainstay of government revenues from its inception in the Han (206 BPE to 220 PE), shows us state production in action. By late-imperial times, most salt was made in hereditary salt households and distributed regionally by hereditary government franchise holders known as salt "merchants." For eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century Hankou, William T. Rowe describes the two hundred salt merchants of the central Yangzi area not as private entrepreneurs, as were most merchants, but as an extension of officialdom: they were "virtually accorded the status of government officials. As holders of hereditary . . . privileges, these merchants in essence held enfeoffed title to a particular salt distribution route." Salt transactions "were formally viewed as little more than internal accounting procedures between agencies of the imperial administration"; the stored salt and storage facilities "were officially held to lie in the public domain, as were the funds covering the depot's operating budget." These extraordinary salt "scholar merchants" had high prestige burnished by literati lifestyles, and they bought degrees by the hatful (91, 99, 119, 117, 184, 205, 207), though these did not make them eligible for administrative office. Such "merchants" differed from the classical administrative scholar-officials in two principal ways: they were not subject to the rule that kept officials from holding posts in their native places (99); and their franchise entitled them to sell not administrative services only (like a magistrate), but a concrete material product. They constituted a special, slightly "lower" branch of officialdom — an officialdom that expected to draw goods and services directly from the population and also to sell some monopolized goods and services directly to them.

The state production of salt (and other goods such as coal, copper, and porcelain) became less "feudal" from the late seventeenth century on, when quasi-

official roles such as that of the Hankou salt merchants were eliminated in favor of more numerous and more completely privatized channels of production and distribution (Rowe 1984:119–20). These facts are consistent with the growth of a more capitalist-like system of urban commerce — which is Rowe's point. The restructured privatized salt system of the later nineteenth century also greatly limited the scale of the now purely private salt merchants, pressing them more firmly into the *petty-capitalist* mold.

Officials could both tax and charge for their administrative duties; they held low-paid franchises to sell official services. The Abbé Huc was amused at a mid-nineteenth-century Chengdu magistrate's candor on the subject: "If it is allowable to make a fortune by trade and commerce, why may one not also grow rich by teaching reason to the people, and developing the principles of justice?" This magistrate was noted for sending agents to dig up cases for him to try, and he complained that one of his districts had "never given me a single suit; concord reigns among all the families in it." Huc observes that these "not very elevated sentiments are common to all the Mandarins, and they express them openly and without scruple" (1970, 1:104–5).

These routine rights of extraction easily blended into the power to squeeze commoners for extraordinary contributions (R. Huang 1974: 229, 230, 232; R. Huang 1969: 103, 105, 125; Yang 1979; *The Far East* 1871:1–3). The British consul to Taiwan, a Mr. Swinhoe, reported in 1864 on the division of spoils among the four civil levels and the one military level of officials on the island at that time. The governor was expected to draw most of his remuneration from the "fabulous" camphor trade; the head of the prefecture drew on court fees and the salt monopoly; the various county magistrates supplemented their salaries with court fees and by intimidation; the marine magistrate had the right to commandeer vessels for state grain transport, so his income came largely from boat captains who wished to evade this onerous service. "But the military offices of Formosa may be looked upon as so many gambling lotteries. The mandarin of the [chief military officer] is said to be the most lucrative on the island." One of these, in office for only eight months, made 4,000 taels (Davidson 1967:100).

Although the state squeezed everyone, there were both practical and ideological reasons for them to squeeze even harder those who trafficked regularly in private commodities. In official eyes, a modest income for owner-operators was legitimate; substantial petty-capitalist profit was tainted and vulnerable (Mann 1987a:16). Merchants and profit-making producers were officially viewed as troublesome elements existing outside the fundamentally agricultural integrity of the TMP, undeserving of the social esteem reserved for agriculturalists and their scholarly overseers. At least one Qing emperor is remembered for measures that intentionally benefited small commerce while suppressing "self-seeking" gentry who, presumably, were accumulating too much wealth through the private economy (Huang Pei 1974:269–70). The efficacy of the Ming state fluctuated from

"slothful and unresponsive" to "more organized and benevolent," varying greatly according to the state's linked capacities to punish and to nurture petty capitalism (Tong 1991:195).

At moments of power, officials sometimes pursued tax revenues to the point of destroying the economic success that produced them (H. Clark 1990:57). In 1876, when nearly 70 percent of Hubei province's revenues came from commercial sources, Hubei officials exported 520,000 taels for court and military use; Hubei was hit again in 1883–84 with special levies. It is no wonder that, as Rowe notes, by the 1880s "the post-Taiping commercial boom centering on Hankow had begun to lose its momentum" as the state regained its capacity to channel wealth into the TMP (1984:18, 202–203)!

Scholars have long assumed that private marketing lay outside official concern except insofar as it could be taxed. Gary Hamilton summarizes:

The government played an active role in regulating commercial activity in its official monopolies on foreign trade, salt, porcelain (from the government factory) and several other lesser items. But in the main . . . the Ming and Qing government[s] did not determine the value of commodities, enforce contracts, set standards for weights and measurements, or even specify the medium of commercial exchange. The government[s] played no significant role in establishing credit institutions, in creating commercial insurance, in setting acceptable interest rates, or even in backing its own paper currency. Beyond occasional attempts at taxation of commodities in transit (which was only institutionalized after 1853), government officially made no attempt to regulate the distribution or to tax the sale of goods. (1985:195)

Yet some scholarship suggests that controlling markets in private commodities was an important aspect of tributary organization. The state not only taxed private markets; it also manipulated them, subordinating market processes to tributary ones. In the late empire, private nonagricultural production made up as much as 30 percent of the national per-capita value added (estimated by Feuerwerker 1984:299). Writing of early Qing officials in Shandong, Susan Mann observes that a "paramount concern was controlling competition in the marketplace: curbing the power of brokers; protecting the local peasant producers, peddlers, and small traders who formed the lateral trade networks supplying local demands for goods and services as well as interregional trading systems; and regulating the activities of the merchant guilds, itinerant traders, and local entrepreneurs" (1987a:58; and see Perdue 1987:149).

The principal channel for state control of merchants was a system of franchised brokers, inaugurated in the Song and perpetuated and strengthened through to the Qing. Brokers' franchises were issued in fourteen agricultural commodities and in cotton and silk cloth. In their respective trades, brokers handled transport and contract labor and acted as legal witnesses to all wholesale transactions, it

being illegal to trade at this level without the presence of the state go-between. Though commoners, brokers held very considerable police, tax, and administrative powers as well (Rowe 1984:187). In conducting fieldwork among Sichuanese and Fujianese communities of former short-haul porters, I became convinced of the power of broker roles in the early twentieth century and of their probable efficacy in earlier periods; broker power was not an administrative fiction.

Brokers' families became a small, hereditary, and kin-linked elite among merchants, somewhat similar to salt-merchant families. They formed a quasi-official extension of the ruling class with the specific privilege of charging fees for obligatory services while at the same time monitoring their merchant brethren in the interest of the state. Although brokers may have served to regularize business practice through the application of bureaucratic standards to various commercial undertakings, the system seems rather to have invited particularization. Ties and fees to a particular broker, not a framework of even-handed law, settled disputes brought to such men.

Apart from their licences to squeeze lesser merchants, brokers appear to have done what Rowe idiosyncratically calls "maintaining market order." By this he means that they prevented price fixing by powerful merchants or consortia. They thereby helped create an oddly artificial market that limited the power over prices of those with large capital. The brokerage system — if it indeed functioned with the fullness Rowe outlines — may have been an important element in official management of the total productive process. By checking the inherent tendency of free markets to produce ever-larger pools of capital, official policy encouraged the maintenance of an intensely competitive market for petty capitalists while retaining the power to monopolize that market for its own use.

Accepting a natural economy level of local trade but keeping incipient capitalism petty absorbed much official attention. According to Ray Huang, the Ming state preferred a low level of economic development to potentially disruptive regional imbalances (1974:2). Mann's insightful study of Qing attempts to tax commerce shows that concern for limiting a challenging mode of production at least equaled desire to tap revenue. On this point, economic historians of Fujian are especially supportive. Chang Pin-tsun sums up a position that underpins most of the essays in an important collection (Vermeer 1990a):

The economic mechanism of late imperial China was formed primarily to achieve stability rather than efficiency. . . . no single economic sector was allowed to grow large and strong enough to shake the foundation of the continent-centered agrarian economy. The maritime-oriented economy in late Ming Fukien was no exception. The Fukienese maritime merchants, therefore, like their inland counterparts, preferred to conform to the norms of the continental economy rather than venture to replace them with mercantile ones which were more conducive to their maritime undertaking. In consequence,

the sector of maritime economy in late Ming Fukien did not accelerate its efficiency orientation so as to erode the continental economy, but was instead eroded by the latter. If the maritime merchants of late Ming Fukien were not initiative and innovative enough to be labeled "commercial capitalists," their restraint from initiation and innovation was well justified in view of the risks involved in the challenge against the whole setup of China's continent-centered agrarian economy. (Chang Pin-tsun 1990:79–80)

#### THE PETTY-CAPITALIST MODE OF PRODUCTION (PCMP)

Although this outline of the TMP is familiar as the traditional Chinese cultural ideal, the PCMP has not been explicitly recognized as a coherent part of an integrated Chinese social formation.<sup>8</sup> It is therefore necessary to describe the petty-capitalist mode and its class relations more fully. Here, I focus on several aspects of petty capitalism and the problem of distinguishing between capitalism and petty capitalism. A fuller analysis of state/kinship control of labor is developed in subsequent chapters.

The PCMP is a system of private production of agricultural and other commodities — as when an agricultural household markets part of its grain or textiles, a tofu manufactory sells beancurd, or a family raises more children than it can employ because it can sell their labor power. Products of these households enter a market in which, despite the personalism of many Chinese petty-capitalist activities, concern for profit dominates other considerations in setting prices (De Groot 1972:311). Petty-capitalist households, especially agricultural ones, often produce for their own use, and they maintain noncapitalist exchanges with kin, friends, and fellow villagers. But their continued reproduction depends on engagement with the market, including the buying and selling of labor power.

Although private, ownership is not individual; household enterprises are managed by men who ideally are agnatic kin. Household and lineage enterprises — here, "patricorporations" — own or control the means of production, such as farmland or workshops. Patricorporate enterprise depends first, and heavily, on its own members for labor. Outsiders are hired primarily to make up for family

8. Analyses of China as an Asiatic or tributary system by John Gledhill 1984 (138) and Eric Wolf 1982 (chap. 8) contain no hint that the complexities of the system might be resolved by the use of such a concept; Karl Wittfogel's treatment of the TMP seems hardly to notice the role of private property in China, though he refers to the rarity of peasant possession of land in agrarian societies generally (1957:276). Asian Marxists, as has already been indicated, continue to attempt to decipher economic history using only classical "feudal" and "capitalist" categories; non-Marxist sinologists generally produce empirical studies that rest very lightly on comparative theory.

labor deficits. Household members may be treated as commodities by the corporation of mature men who own its property; wives, daughters, and immature sons can be sold by the household head, and persons may be purchased to take up such positions for the productive and reproductive advantage of the household as a whole. The boundary between kinsperson and hired hand is often blurred. This blurring, to be explored more fully in Chapters 5, 6, and 7, accounts for the difficulties in characterizing Chinese forms of commodity production (see Judd 1994: chap. 4). In late-imperial China, labor was free neither to escape the control of kin seniors nor to enter any and all segments of the market.

Nonkin laborers were hired, typically in small numbers, for long, fixed periods such as the agricultural year or for the customary three to five years of the craft apprentice (Morse 1966:33). The commoditization of this labor was partly controlled by China's famous guilds. Scholars note that guilds produced "practically all manufactured goods sold" in pre-twentieth-century China, and the "majority of the town population live[d] by their handicraft, working in small shops" (Burgess 1966:29). These guilds "establish[ed] rules and compel[led] obedience to them; they fix[ed] prices and enforce[d] adhesion; they settle[d] or modif[ied] trade customs and obtain[ed] instant acquiescence" (Morse 1966:31). As long as the guilds' institutional behavior remained orthodox, the state permitted this customary regulation of labor.

Many artisans and laborers thus were organized against competition from non-members. Wages were not set entirely by market mechanisms, and entry into some occupations was impeded by guild monopoly. Yet guilds did not control occupations as completely as the quotations from John Burgess and Hosea Morse might indicate. Their tendency in the late nineteenth century to make an occupation hereditary may have resulted from competition with foreign commerce and technology (Fewsmith 1983:626). Even where they were strong, guildsmen did not always insist on their trade monopoly (Burgess 1966:126; Rowe 1984:141). Guilds were typically neither difficult nor very expensive to join, and they responded rapidly through changes in their rules and wage levels to changing economic conditions (Burgess 1966:99, 102). Their existence and considerable power surely affected the market for skilled and semiskilled labor, but that market existed nonetheless.

China's late-imperial labor market was sticky not only in response to market competition but also in response to TMP demands. Guilds were organized as much to defend members against excessive exactions by officials as against competitors. Protests and boycotts were often successful (Burgess 1966:78; Morse 1966: 30, 31, 45-46). Responsiveness to market pressures was also slowed, though not precluded, by the tendency of employers to require introductions by guarantors or brokers from employees.

Markets in labor (as well as in other things) were also indirectly affected by the constraints the state placed on the transport of goods by sea (Davis 1972, 2:375)

and by the willingness and ability of officials to construct and maintain such infrastructural supports in production as irrigation systems, roads, and canals. But these and other constraints mentioned above, including those of kinship, seem not to have greatly impeded constant flows of Chinese workers from rural to urban areas, into lands left empty by disasters, and from China to every corner of the earth.

That markets in land were important in late-imperial China is beyond dispute. It is important to recognize that, when means of production were held by patricorporations rather than in individual tenure, land sales were complicated by the multiple rights of agnatic kin. (Aspects of these issues are explored in Chapters 5 and 6.)

Patricorporations and communities formed production networks through an extensive repertory of business skills and institutions.<sup>9</sup> Such skills were learned mostly informally from kin, community, and even from the play of children (Huc 1970, 2:149).

Petty-capitalist business dealings were based on personalistic ties and a local reputation for honesty that made possible a great deal of extension of credit secured by unofficial rather than legal sanctions. The courts of the late empire, the People's Republic of China, and to a lesser degree Taiwan have generally been un-

9. Excellent descriptions of petty-capitalist business practice are found in Fried 1953; Skinner 1961; De Gloppe 1972, 1979; T'ang Mei-chun 1974: chap. 4; Nonini 1979, 1983a, 1983b; Cooper 1980; Omohundro 1981; Harrell 1982, 1987; Stites 1982, 1985; Smart 1983, 1986; Rowe 1984; Numazaki 1986, 1991, 1992; Wright 1988; Xu Xinwu 1988; Bosco 1989; Hill 1989; Gardella 1990; Redding 1990; Mao Zedong 1990: chap. 3; Basu 1991a, 1991b; Smart and Smart 1991, 1992; Oxfield 1992, 1993; Skoggard 1993.

Tim Wright focuses on the "management practices of China's capitalist entrepreneurs up to 1937" (1988:185); these capitalists came from the bureaucracy or politics rather than from private commerce, or industry. Rather than use "universalistic criteria in staff selection, capital mobilization and economic transactions, the entrepreneurs were impelled by 'traditional' values to work mainly through particularistic criteria — especially familial ties, but also many other relationships, such as native place loyalties and teacher-pupil, school or institutional links" (187). That is, they maintained many aspects of petty-capitalist practice.

Ann Maxwell Hill's study of the tea trade in a predominantly Dai area of South China stresses effortful participation by merchants, their development of personalistic ties, and their cautious capitalization dependent on social relations and guarantees. "Merchant associations, tea 'futures,' short-term loans, and production for market using labor-intensive technology" characterized this trade (1989:333-34).

In discussing the persistence of handicraft cotton production against early industrial competition, Xu Xinwu concludes (as, he says, did the English diplomat, W. H. Mitchell) that handicrafts competed so well because "domestic handicrafts and the small peasant economy were so intertwined that they were able to resist stubbornly machine industry. The small peasants of China could fully utilize and rationally distribute surplus household labor. They also economized with the greatest of care, as for example in the use of raw cotton." They could make cloth for domestic consumption "almost without concern for cost-benefit calculations" (1988:46).

sympathetic to business disputes. Recourse to the courts was and is too dangerous to complainants to be anything but a last resort. People uphold their business agreements because the gods enjoin probity (Saso 1982), because they want to protect reputation and future creditworthiness, and because creditors sometimes enforced repayment through political clout or physical muscle. These sanctions have long worked well enough for the regular transaction of business (Huc 1970:2:150). In the present as in the past, in the absence of trust nurtured through personalistic ties, one observer notes that "financial control practices are still so clandestine that they are only partly rational" (Redding 1990:11).

Petty-capitalist enterprises, whether enormous or tiny (Huc 1970:2:145), found capital and arranged for the extension of credit through rotating credit clubs, personal loans, the transfer of brideprice and dowry, pawnshops, moneylending, gambling, protection rackets run by gangs, and other mechanisms large and small. Private postal systems of great efficiency and honesty connected much of the Chinese world, including southeast Asian settlements (Ball 1982:522-23; Bird 1983:158). Effective money transfers within China by highly personalistic private banking systems are also well attested (e.g. Ball 1982:63-66; Commeaux 1970:61). Even the poorest experienced money as a commodity (Ball 1982:445-50).

Personalism in business, like many aspects of petty capitalism, was strongly reinforced by the state. The official pawnshop interest rate in mid-nineteenth century, for example, was 30 percent. Officials intended this high charge, according to Chinese views of the time, to keep land prices from rising by offering a strong alternative investment so as to "render the distribution of land proportioned to the number of families, and the circulation of money more active and uniform" (Huc 1970, 2:133; see also Staunton 1810:530-32). Such usurious interest encouraged borrowers to "pull" on personal ties for loans.

It is difficult to manage capitalist-like relations of production without a system of law that is directed to protect private property and that transcends kinship. Authors seeking sprouts of capitalism have ferreted out examples of corporate-like partnerships, such as those discussed by Rowe (1984:72-74; see also Numazaki 1991:42-45). I have encountered them myself in fieldwork among ordinary folk: unrelated men in some Fujian coastal villages have traditionally put in small capital shares to pickle oysters for sale to Xiamen City. They split the profits; then the temporary production unit dissolves. But impersonal business ties were viewed negatively by officials who feared the expansion of local fortunes. They sometimes forbade joint land purchases by multiple households, even if these were organized as lineages (Perdue 1987:147). Impersonal dealings were also risky. In Hankou during a speculative credit boom between 1860 and 1890, thousands of debtors absconded. The domino effect of one bankrupt's bringing down others shows that mechanisms to protect purely commercial contracts were virtually absent (Rowe 1984:166). Susan Mann Jones makes the same point (1972).

Businessmen could and did petition local officials for legal status for the regulations they and their organizations drew up to protect their contracts. This bottom-up mechanism for creating a legal framework for private property rights was inherently weak, if relatively democratic. The initiative must generally have been the merchants'; the laws thus enacted must have been localized and fragmentary; and officials willing to accept the laws in principle might have been unwilling to enforce them. In late-nineteenth-century Hankou, merchants of the tea guild successfully pressed regional rulers to authorize a series of measures ensuring honest business practice. Both the pressure and the legalization were reiterated in language that Rowe sees as suggesting "a resemblance between the forms of market management the guild and the brokers desired for the tea trade and those employed in the government-supervised salt market" (1984:146). The merchants requested the same degree of legal and practical protection for private as for state transactions. No measures for enforcement of these laws appeared, however. For the most part, "The Chinese seemed willing . . . to rely upon private compulsion to guarantee prompt and fair payment" (1984:145). Although brokers themselves were in an excellent position to enforce official commercial codes to protect merchant property (against default, breach of contract, etc.), it is not at all clear that they did so. Rowe's detailed account of brokers' roles offers no suggestion that merchants took problems, such as the wave of absconding debtors, to brokers as they might have to a court. One must also assume that the multitude of brokers in many trades and circumstances, concerned primarily with trade and with their role as privileged middlemen in their associates' business deals, could hardly have formulated and promoted the sort of regular legal precedents required to protect individual, corporate, or other nonfamily-estate property. Until evidence to the contrary comes to light, we must continue to assume that Chinese officials were more inclined — and strongly so — to protect family estates based on inheritance than the recent and individualistic earnings of entrepreneurs and nonkin partnerships.

Rowe himself disagrees with the idea that officials did not try to enforce commercial liability, noting that Chinese merchants in Hankou frequently brought debtors to magistrates' courts, and he illustrates the point with three cases. In one, the governor's yamen compelled the dishonest dealers to pay up, but his other two examples remind us why courts were understandably feared and avoided in business as in other matters: the defendants — one, apparently innocent — were beaten to death in open court (168-70). Legal action was punitive and *ex post facto* rather than aimed at the construction of a legal framework for the protection of property. Only in the realm of property as it undergirded the patricorporations was the state both firm and enduringly consistent in its legal stance.

Harsh and unceasing competition was another factor that limited the growth of business relations outside the patricorporation. Market processes generated

pressures that trade associations attempted to limit, but against which agriculturalists, artisans, and merchants living in their home communities had few defenses. Where each producer household's earnings threaten every other's, the long-term tendency of commoditization is to dissolve the bonds of human relationships in the impersonality of the market, where everything can be bought and sold. Such an economy breeds fear and distrust of one's neighbors in addition to that felt for autocratic authorities.

Distrust and fear of strangers, or even of those who are simply outside the circle of kin, are striking characteristics of Chinese people (as well as of others, such as rural Italians and Mexicans who struggle on the fringes of capitalist economies [G. Foster 1967]). This distrust is vividly dramatized in the near-universal Chinese anxiety about ghosts. Ghosts represent perhaps the ultimate fear in Chinese life, that of being alone in an exacting, competitive world, with no economic base. Their lack of human connection to material resources makes them essentially evil. In life, such a person is a wandering stranger, or a beggar (Jordan 1972; A. Wolf 1974b; Weller 1985, 1987), the ultimate in propertylessness. Many vivid rituals and beliefs are foils for these images; funeral and marriage rites, for example, stress the family as the only safe haven in a dangerous world. The chasm between the household and the outer economy is built into China's highest ethics, and into its deepest fears.

People in the PCMP produced their own ideologies, symbols, and rituals through which common folk articulated their perceptions of their world, instructed the young and one another, and enacted them into reality. These ideologies were vast and protean in scope, responsive as they were to problems of practical production, ecological balance, political power, gender definition, ultimate meaning, and a myriad of other cultural complexities. (see D. Johnson et al. 1985; Gates and Weller 1987). They are similar in many ways to those produced by peasant peoples generally. Fertility, for example, whether of people, animals, vegetation, or the soil itself is stressed, symbolized, and sacralized.

Some PCMP ideological preoccupations are unique to and characteristic of petty-capitalist culture. Money is a magical and a sacred substance in Chinese folk life, offered to gods and spirits, used for purification and to symbolize productive and reproductive increase. The highly commercialized Cantonese tell folk tales of fetishized money that chooses to "come to a new home" or "run away from [its] old home" (Sung Hok-pang 1974:163-66). Folk rituals support the virtues of getting rich, paying one's debts, and investing for profit. Petty-capitalist commoners, producing for market with wage labor and partially commodified patricorporate labor, oppositional to a demanding tributary mode, created moral visions in which upward class mobility is both possible and imperative. The climb began on the rugged petty-capitalist path to wealth through work, from which a few talented fortunates might float free into the tributary empyrean.

Competition among patricorporate producers created a ferment of social mobility among commoners, dividing them into three petty-capitalist classes: those that owned capital and hired labor, those that largely labored on their own capital or on land in secure tenancy), and those that depended primarily on selling their labor for survival.

Class relations within the PCMP enabled some households to accumulate resources from the exploitation of labor, the renting of land, commerce, the profitable production of commodities, and the lending of money. Whatever may have been the long-term effect of such accumulations, the circulation of wealth through the economy had a profound effect on its constituent households, dividing them roughly into labor-hiring owners, owner-operators (and, sometimes, secure tenants), and laborers. Economic limitation and political caution converged to make owner-operators/secure tenants the statistical norm, but competition and the secular growth of commoditization made the line between them and surplus-accumulating households only a quantitative matter.

In cotton-growing north China, Philip Huang sees these as "social strata" distinguished by different motivations as well as by different production relations. He contrasts "managerial landlords" who employed family and waged labor with "leasing landlords," usually absentee, who rented out to tenants. Of the two, the managerial households derived higher returns "because most managerial farmer households did some farm labor themselves, whereas those who leased out their land did not." As this pattern emerged, Qing officials characterized these employers of labor together with their workers: "they were all commoners who got their hands dirty in the lowly and menial task of farming" (72, 98). To the hired hands, although they were relative equals who shared in household life and work, the gap must have seemed much wider.

Huang's study reveals another important characteristic of petty-capitalist commodity production — its tendency to emerge from leasing landlord/tenant relations, and to return to them when the boom was over (78). The leasing landlord/tenant relationships that are the foil to Huang's managerial system operated more on tributary than on petty-capitalist principles. In times and places of undynamic markets, such landlord/tenant relations *might* have been (as they were Huang's description) a relatively unprofitable but secure means for merchants to protect accumulated wealth. In other regions, such as Taiwan or the Pearl River delta, where wealthy men speculated in land, imported tenants, built infrastructure, and sometimes processed and sold the products, tenancy was part and parcel of petty capitalism, their tenants a semiproletariat. John Shepherd warns us against mistaking tenant status for poverty (1988:427); Dwight Perkins observes that southern tenants were sometimes better off than northern owners (1969:106-7). The vexed question of what tenancy meant in China must be an-

swered in locally specific terms and must take into account the local concatenation of tributary and petty-capitalist options.

Household firms circulated through the petty-capitalist classes in a social eddy internal to the TMP, spinning off into officialdom members of the rare families lucky and clever enough to groom outstanding scholars. Although scholarly work on social mobility in China emphasizes movement between official and commoner classes, most mobility in fact occurred among commoners. Except in rare periods when economic expansion greatly outstripped population growth, most of that mobility was always downward.

Class relations in the PCMP — the relations among landlord/merchants, owner-operators (including Huang's managerial landlords), and the largely propertyless — are clear in principle but blurred in practice. Descriptions of rural classes in China at the time of Communist land reform show a spectrum of imperceptible gradations in many parts of the country — from households that owned a great deal of land and did no manual work themselves, to "rich peasants" who did a little work but hired out most of it, to those that balanced household labor and capital (the unit that best matched the purposes of the TMP), to those who owned insufficient land and so rented a little additional land, to families farming tenanted land, to hired laborers with no means of production at all (Crook and Crook 1959; Hinton 1966: chap. 3 and app. C). Similar ranges could be found outside agriculture, from the wealthiest of merchants through artisan households that sold their own products to jobbers who peddled others' goods on city streets.

When land, labor, or commodity markets were volatile, individual persons and households are difficult to pigeonhole. (The Marxist concept of class is less a sorting system for persons than an image of political-economic forces in motion.) Empirically intermediate cases need not obscure the distinctions that, in our different ways, Huang and I see as characteristic of Chinese commoners. It should be noted too that the sharp distinction between agricultural and nonagricultural enterprise as the basis for family fortunes characteristically made by the Chinese themselves turns out, in the light of much recent scholarship, to be illusory (e.g. Rowe 1984:119; Mann 1987a:21–23).

Petty capitalism's economic free-for-all held a promise of stability in the small owner-operator household. This political-economic unit owed its institutional strength and its culturally perceived desirability to two sources. First, in the petty-capitalist competition for resources, such a household achieved the relative certainty of controlling both its own labor and its own means of production, and hence its own subsistence. Although having *more* property than family labor to work it might seem desirable — it was unattainable for most people — those who hired outsiders or rented resources to them risked losses from incompetent or absconding workers, tenants, or managers, a frequent source of anxiety. On the other hand, those with nothing to sell but their labor faced both constant competition for subsistence earnings and the dreadful reality that when they were

too weak to work they would not eat. Running a small farm or business did not entirely exempt a family from economic competition, but it provided a haven from some of its worst features. The relative safety of family proprietorship versus the risks to which other petty-capitalist classes were liable strongly motivated people to make whatever economic and kinship choices necessary to achieve it.

The second source of strength for the owner-operator class was the official fixation (necessary to the TMP) on patricorporations as society's most significant units. The accumulation of resources in patricorporations was limited by the law of equal inheritance, by officials' exactions, and by the general insecurity of property not held by kinship entities recognized by the state. At the same time, Chinese states gave kin seniors powerful claims to the labor and persons of their juniors, especially women and girls. These claims, in commoditized contexts, provided a universally available source of primitive accumulation to every household head. The gender/kinship system that has formed around these claims is discussed in detail in subsequent chapters.

To the degree the late-imperial economy was stable — that is, did not experience capitalist-like technical innovation and a resulting sharp expansion — landlords and merchants were essentially the recipients of the benefits of inequalities deriving from market competition combined with family-cycle variation. Where there were few market opportunities or where the influence of the TMP was especially strong, such potential capitalists appear often to have acted in most uncaptalist fashion, consuming their surpluses in the support of ever-larger households and (relatively) luxurious living rather than frugally accumulating and reinvesting. Many of them also invested money and potential family labor in the expensive and painful process of traditional education, hoping through success in official examinations to tap into not only the glory and power but also into the wealth that came from membership in the class of scholar-officials that dominated the TMP. The intense competition for places in this class assured that most would fail. Abandoning the core PCMP values of frugality and manual work for the leisured life of a would-be scholar-official *before* one gained access to TMP resources was a likely road to loss of all. Downward mobility of such families was one of the important sources of motion within the PCMP.

Where in this dually driven class analysis are the "gentry"? The term has been used to describe local wealthy powerholders on whom the state depended to maintain control in the countryside and who were in return permitted to extract surplus through both political and economic means. Although sometimes a convenient descriptive term, like "commercialization" or "market economy," it carries no theoretical implications, leads to no further questions. Why did these "gentry" espouse an anticommercial ideology of agrarian stability while maintaining their position in the world through vigorous economic competition? Why did they believe themselves to be obliged to sink capital into relatively low-profit land and into very chancy investment in sons' educations when commod-

ity production promised greater profit? Just as it is worthwhile to ask "what does the ruling class do when it rules?" we may inquire what the gentry did when it gentrified pawnbrokers and brickmakers into scholars.

Many of the oddities and variations of this portmanteau category are better understood when we see the gentry as those unusual petty capitalists who accumulated resources beyond their capacity to expand their households or lineages, and thus beyond the protection afforded to property properly subordinated to kin relationships. Such men converted wealth (via the subjection of young men to a harsh educational regime) into officeholding and hence into the right to benefit from TMP economic relations rather than to be exploited by them. Paradoxically, because wealth could not be privatized beyond the family, the rich had to find a public role to safeguard private property. Without degrees, the merely rich, half-escaped from the control of kinship, existed uneasily in an unaccounted-for social space between the molecular producer patricorporations and the ruling officials responsible for their responsiveness. Thus the odor of immorality, of illegitimacy, hung about merchants, whose wealth was so easily hidden, privatized, from state and family alike.

#### THE PCMP VERSUS CAPITALISM

Marx defined capitalism in two ways: by its characteristic relations of production and by its historical tendency to expand both its productive capacity and its hegemony. Capitalist relations of production are those of the marketplace. All major factors of production — and most especially labor power — can be freely bought and sold in an impersonal market so that the relationships between persons engaged in production become impersonal money transactions. Those who own the means of production confront those who have only labor power to sell from a position of power which enables the former to set the terms of the exchange. By paying in wages only what is required to maintain and reproduce the average worker, while selling the product for more than that amount, the owner of the means of production extracts surplus value from, technically exploits (see Littlefield 1978), the worker. Owners then reinvest at least a part of that surplus in expanding their firms.

Did late-imperial China have a free market in the factors of production which produced class inequality, exploitation, and capital accumulation? Whether most agricultural labor was freely sold as a commodity — as in the relations among owner-employers, owner-operators, and tenant/hired hands — or was tied to class superiors in some form of bondage — as in serfdom and slavery — is extremely significant. Many analysts have made the transition from serf or bonded to "free" status the primary criterion for detecting sprouts of an indigenous Chinese capitalism (e.g. So 1986; Wang Fangzhong 1987; Ke Changji 1987; Kamachi 1990). According to Mark Elvin, serfdom on large private estates or manors en-

compassed most of the peasant population during the Song (1973: chap. 6), and large but generally decreasing proportions of that population until the eighteenth century. Agricultural labor was increasingly subject to the market from the eighteenth century on, a trend on which "sprouts" scholars of the People's Republic of China base their judgment as to the beginnings of indigenous capitalism. Chao Kang has argued, however, that servile or indentured labor was a relatively minor part of China's agricultural system. Chao insists that relatively small farms, including a large proportion of owner-operated ones, have been the most characteristic agrarian form, especially since the Song (1987:222). Farms, both would agree, ranged from large manors to independent smallholders, using labor obtainable through the noneconomic "feudal" power of servile and filial obligation as well as through the market. The determination of the timing of a shift to wage labor, whether in the Song or during the Ming/Qing expansion, cannot yet be made. Even if wage labor was not common before the eighteenth century, however, recurrent pressure for its commoditization may have been a powerful source of tension and dynamism in earlier centuries.

Too sharp a focus on this issue may be misleading, however. A brief comparison with the Euro-American case shows us why. Whether New World slavery was a precursor to capitalism or a part of it has been much debated (Banaji 1979). As Sidney Mintz so precisely argues, if investors in American plantations "were not capitalists, if the slaves were not proletarians, if mercantilism rather than a free economy prevailed, if the rate of accumulation of profit was low and the organic composition of capital static — if all of these things were true, it also remains true that these curious agroindustrial enterprises nourished certain capitalist classes at home *as they were becoming more capitalistic*" (1985:61). Parallel arguments cannot be made for China, which was not connected until much more recently to the world capitalist system, and where the ruling class was not a reinvesting bourgeoisie. Free, or wage, labor helps define capitalism, but so does the character of the dominant class. In China, no matter what the labor regime, most surpluses beyond the ambit of limited patricorporate expansion were channeled to officials, not to capitalists.

If capitalist-like tendencies are both indigenous and deeply rooted, the further question arises of whether today's China can reject its lingering late-imperial "feudal" elements and move directly to a version of socialism or whether it must and should pass through a period of capitalist development. The argument ceases to be a battle if China's commodity production, now accepted by all as early and important (see, for example, Fu Yiling 1986 and Chao Kang 1987) is distinguished from capitalism and seen in its own terms.

If China had a labor market, it follows that exploitation in a formal sense occurred. But whether surplus value was extracted by owners from nonowners has been obscured by a perhaps dogmatic unwillingness to perceive that ownership had both a market and a tributary meaning. Exploitation, the extraction of sur-

plus value from a worker's unpaid work, was a normal part of Chinese life, where landlessness was common and many earned their livelihood through labor alone. Exploitation occurred too in households, where women were legally and customarily excluded from ownership in the agnatic corporation but obliged to work for that corporation as long as they remained members of it.

Whether this exploitation resulted in the accumulation of capital as in capitalism proper, however, is problematic. Here, we must consider Marx's concern for the historical tendencies of the capitalist mode. If capital accumulates through the exploitation of labor and is reinvested, reaps additional surplus value, and thus accumulates further, we may expect to see an expansionary thrust to the entire economy. In the West, capitalism triggered revolutions in science, technology, and economic growth with the industrial revolution. From there, it became the dominant mode of production in Europe and in most of the rest of the world. Capitalism enabled favored classes and countries to amass capital, power, and knowledge at an unprecedented rate. In China, something rather different occurred.

Although China surely failed to develop an expansionary hegemonic capitalism like that of the West, it did not fail to expand; the Qing especially was an era of extraordinary absolute growth. Per-capita interprovincial trade may have been larger than Europe's internal trade at the beginning of the nineteenth century (Murphey 1970:23). Though the population expanded more than fourfold from the Northern Song (ca. 1080) to the time foreigners forced an entry for capitalism in the mid-nineteenth century, rice production per capita remained stable throughout the period (Feuerwerker 1984:300), and the general standard of living does not seem to have fallen significantly until the impact of the West was felt. Chinese productivity came close to keeping up with population growth, even though the amount of arable land did not increase by much. As we know from Elvin (1973), this balance was accomplished largely through labor intensification rather than through the technical innovation or greater use of capital characteristic of capitalism.

Economic development is defined as per-capita increase in productivity and, by implication, as the private accumulation of capital. With inherently expansionary tendencies, the PCMP did generate increases in productivity, but private accumulation was sharply limited. Apart from making a scattering of merchants rich, China's wealth accumulated in the hands of the ruling class of officials, who spent it in building a state strong enough to maintain its tax-collecting power, to defend itself from internal and external enemies, and to create a sophisticated ideological apparatus sufficiently powerful to convince most people to submit voluntarily (and inexpensively) to its demands. That state, for all its failings by our and others' lights, excluded Western imperialism more effectively than did any other part of the world but Japan, and it regained its independence from that system after only a century of partial penetration. China was not (or only very

briefly) politically partitioned, unlike southeast Asia, Africa, and South America, and thus not made permanently vulnerable to the mercies of the world system that created Bangladesh, Zaire, Brazil, and Haiti. China's economic expansion was moved by the motor of petty capitalism but guided by state-minded rulers who were as engaged with making productivity serve the state as with repelling barbarians.

Rowe summarizes the very considerable scholarship on state-merchant relations as supporting four possible, and not necessarily exclusive, stances by officials toward commodity production: repression, neglect, collusion, and stimulation (1984:177). Out of this complex, I would stress the two most apparently contradictory: repression and stimulation. That is, officials saw no harm in encouraging the petty productive pursuits of small people — of tiny firms that could be perceived as kin groups. Such activity produced several outcomes of value to the state: tax revenues larger than those obtainable from subsistence farming, the small daily comforts (for themselves as well as for commoners) invented by a population of energetic perfectors of low-technology techniques, and an outlet for the aspirations to social mobility inspired, but never satisfied, by the educational route to power and wealth.



## Motion in the System

A bolt of silk for each clear toned song.  
Still these beauties do not think it is enough.  
Little do they know of a weaving girl,  
Sitting cold by her window,  
Endlessly throwing her shuttle to and fro.  
— Chien Tao, Song (woman) poet

Chinese people structure their lives following the logic of two often contradictory modes of production. But there is nothing static about this structure. Its motion derives, I believe, from three aspects of petty capitalism: the competition between the two modes of production for hegemony; the intricate tradeoff between gender and class inequalities that gave the PCMP its sources for accumulation; and the extraordinary demographic expansiveness that laboring under multiple forms of exploitation created.

### COMPETITION BETWEEN THE MODES OF PRODUCTION

In certain times and places, Chinese people emphasized petty-capitalist choices; in others, they clung to the eternal verities of the TMP. One imagines a pubescent girl overhearing her parents plan her fate. Would she be sold to a brothel in a distant city next week or remain at home a few more years, to be sent off with dowry and firecrackers as a wife? Such decisions remind us that while markets offer a certain freedom of action they also assign prices to everything; a person can become a commodity. It reminds us too that while people are ex-

Lines from Chien Tao's poem are from Kenneth Rexroth and Ling Chung, eds. and trans., *The Orchid Boat: Women Poets of China*. Copyright © 1972 by Kenneth Rexroth and Ling Chung. Reprinted by permission of New Directions Pub. Corp.

ploited (by definition) in tributary relationships, those relationships also contain some customary limits to exploitation. Who you are, what your person, labor, or product is worth on a nearby market, whether there is a nearby market for any of these, how active officials might be in supporting and imposing tributary ideals of conduct — from such data people calculate chances and choices, strengthening by their participation either tributary or petty-capitalist hegemony in a household, a village, a class, a region, an era.

For the last thousand years, petty capitalism offered an additional, non-tributary sphere of economic action to many, probably most, Chinese people. The scale of China's commerce has been vast, its persistence in the face of political upheaval remarkable. The impact on Chinese daily life of commoditization may be greater than the impact of capitalism proper has been on the culture of its Euro-American heartland. Chinese commoners sought economic niches left vacant by the TMP, acting with clever dishonesty toward its principles and practices, ingeniously recycling for their own uses the sanctity accorded to such key institutions as patrilineal kinship. Petty-capitalist practice in China began and remains secondary, subversive, contorted, dangerous — and liberating.

Petty-capitalist expansion, and the people who enacted it, forced the class beneficiaries of the TMP to grapple with its disorderly tendencies, to find ways to control it, and to use it for state ends. Like partners in a bad marriage, the two modes polarized each other: extremes of authoritarianism came to characterize Chinese officials, exaggerated commoditization the general populace. Confucian humanism sometimes softened and countered that authoritarianism, while high business ethics kept honor among merchants. More and more, late-imperial culture was crafted by both the tightening fist of hierarchy and the invisible hand of the market. Paul Cohen, discussing the work of the historian J. H. Hexter, notes that socially contradictory tendencies "although polar to one another, *could*, both at once, rise to higher levels of intensity" (1984:93). Such a pattern is clearly discernible in Chinese history.

Evidence for a secular tendency during late-imperial China toward extremes of autocracy are readily found. Thomas Metzger has analyzed the increasingly stylized role of officials, whose behavior was controlled by elaborate sanctions (1973:347-57). Gary Hamilton argues that in kinship regulation the "terminology of patriarchalism was used increasingly to establish role relationships, but the fact of patriarchalism receded" in the face of ever-growing state control of family matters (1984:418). Derk Bodde and Clarence Morris discuss the enormous expansion of legally punishable offenses during the Qing, including a rise in capital offenses from 282 in the Ming to 813 by mid-Qing (1967: 102-4). The Chinese state grew strong in the Song, and stronger yet thereafter, as it invented mechanisms for more reliable and efficient extraction of resources. This increase does not mean that officials constantly raised tax rates; much evidence suggests that

this was not so. But both logic and evidence argue that, from the Song forward, officials were better able to enforce the collection of land taxes, partly by encouraging owner-operation of private property; to greatly increase their revenue by taxing commerce (Shiba 1970; Mann 1987a); and to limit resistance, rebellion, and warfare that both directly inhibit tax collection and have in China historically tended toward the refeudalization of landlord-peasant relations.

Commodity production also shows long-term growth in Chinese history. The terms most Western scholars use to describe this petty capitalism — “commercialization” and “market economy” — are simply too blunt for the purpose. “Markets” and “commerce” have flourished in west African chiefdoms, under the classic Maya, in colonial Indonesia, in precapitalist Europe, and in the contemporary United States: terms that must accommodate all these can have very little edge. They get at few of the qualities that China’s PCMP shared with European capitalism and at none of the qualities that differentiated the two.

Song expansion rested on the green revolution of triple cropping and of new rice varieties imported from southeast Asia (Elvin 1973: chap. 9). China’s was not merely a “natural economy,” however. Regional markets were extensive, and large proportions of the population lived by producing for profit. The level of commoditization from the Song on marked a radical departure from the past and clearly distinguish late-imperial China from social formations in which the factors of production were not, or not freely, bought and sold privately. Before the industrial revolution, it is probable that more Chinese depended on the market for food, clothing, fuel, and other daily needs, and for money with which to buy them, than any other people had ever done. In the words of a prominent Japanese Song scholar:

It is generally recognized that the period of transition from the later part of the T’ang dynasty to the Sung dynasty (in other words, the tenth to the thirteenth centuries) constituted a watershed in Chinese history. . . . The state-controlled land tenure system . . . gave way to private property. . . ; and there were corresponding alterations in the structure of taxation. An upsurge in agricultural productivity took place, connected in part with the intensified development of the Kiangnan [south of the Yangzi River] region. . . there was an increase in internal and overseas trade, while the volume of money in circulation rose and credit instruments enjoyed a much wider use than previously. (Shiba 1970:1)

Farming for a market offered an alternative to tribute-paying peasantry, a new class of government bureaucrats replaced landed aristocrats, the Neo-Confucians emerged to synthesize family, polity, and metaphysics, the wealthy created lineages as a new and powerful patriarchal form, and cities grew spectacularly on a complex division of labor. Elements of all these changes predated Song times, but

by the late years of the period they were essential to Chinese culture. The later Ming expansion, emphasized by “sprouts” authors as the point of emergence of capitalist tendencies, was also an important but, I believe, secondary developmental phase in the PCMP.

Given an economy that already contained important capitalist-like elements, the Song agricultural spurt set in train a political economic complex the main outlines of which shaped the Ming — and later Chinas. New opportunities in Ming times did not alter political, economic, kinship, or other patterns greatly. They merely engendered another turn of the screw of state power to contain an increasingly flexible and sophisticated petty capitalism.

Exchange relations are not simple matters of the transfer of goods and services. In all human cultures, they have an organizing, even a moral, character in which the exchange of things — even of money — comes to symbolize and validate social relations (Parry and Bloch 1989). Market exchanges are easily understood by contemporary Euro-Americans. They are “negative reciprocity,” the attempt to get more than one gives, the heart of capitalism. Commodity relations are competitive, short-term, impersonal, and both productive and expressive of feelings of opposing interests. Feelings of opposition of interest, Marx argued, are damped by the occult nature of capitalist exploitation, especially in wage work, where surplus value accrues to the owner of capital without its ever being directly taken from the worker’s hand. But the goal of getting the better of the other, of exploitation, is often readily apparent to participants.

Tributary exchanges are also cryptic. The exploitation inherent in a system of one-way “gifts” made under coercion in societies such as China’s is veiled in ideology and promises of reciprocation in some “higher,” nonmaterial sphere. Chinese officials offered commoners the implicit bargain of surrendering taxes and labor services for the assurance that the hierarchy under which they suffered was imposed by a cosmic categorical imperative and thus, all evidence to the contrary notwithstanding, was good. The key Confucian values of *zhong*, loyalty, and *xiao*, filial submission, both enjoined inferiors to keep giving to superiors even when no reciprocation was possible — as when a loyal minister gave his life for a dead sovereign or extinct dynasty, or a son continued to support a dead parent through ritual. Even among the living, the tributary, or feudal, virtues were seen as essentially unbalanced and incapable of being balanced. The parent who gave life could be given nothing equivalent in return; so also for the ruler who made social existence possible. Such debts are absolute, unrepayable. Tribute exchanges, unlike those in commodities, are not competitive, for neither party legitimately strives to outdo the other. Who is supposed to gain in terms of the world’s goods is already settled by the nature of the relationship.

These relationships are neither impersonal nor psychologically simple. Unlike those of capitalism, their unequal claims are not concealed in the wage relationship: grain is seized from the bin, and yarn from the spindle. Yet though produc-

ers suffer material loss, they are expected to respond with emotions of gratitude, or at least of humble submission. Elite culture teaches subordinates that they should *want* to give tribute, whether taxes to sacred rulers or earnings to beloved parents. Ideology often fails, and superiors take their due by force. Such ideological double-binds create perverse emotions in tributary relationships. In discussing Mexican peasants, Eric Wolf interprets the way experience of family authority "provide[s] the fuel for adult institutions which manage to counterfeit the character of the original situation that first produced them. The hacienda achieved this end by elevating the hacienda owner to the role of a stern and irascible father, prepared to guide the steps of his worker-children, ready to unleash his temper and anger upon them when provoked." His protector/punisher role "bound men not only through debts or through force but also through ties of love and hate" (1959:208).

Chinese people were often forced by the slenderness of their resources to choose between exchanging something, or someone, as a tributary "gift" or as a money-making commodity. To make their choice was to situate one's self in alternative social and moral worlds and to experience very different emotional consequences.

Much of the motion in China's political economy derives from the multiple contradictions between the patterns I have summed up as its two modes of production. Over the centuries, petty-capitalist competition drove people to produce more to keep what they had; official power found better ways to take its cut from every source of production. If, within a single set of economic parameters, two Chinese classes had struggled for dominance, as capitalists and proletarians struggled under the brief reign of English laissez-faire capitalism, the situation would explain itself, and there would be fewer arguments about Chinese history. If, however, the Chinese had two coherent visions of the world, based on two directly conflicting imperatives for production and exchange in which most people participated simultaneously, the motion in that structure was not the win-or-lose of formal battle but the absorption and transformation of guerrilla war. That, perhaps, is why ordinary Chinese, in their temples, universally pray for peace.

#### GENDER IN THE ORIGINS OF THE PCMP

Polarization between the two modes could begin to have its long-term intensifying effects on Chinese belief and institutions only after the PCMP had cohered in the form described in Chapter 2, when the TMP had reached its bureaucratized late-imperial form.<sup>1</sup> This coherence occurred in the Song dynasty as a newly dearistocratized ruling class, whose members depended greatly on

1. Some of the arguments in this section are included in Gates 1989.

commercial wealth for their power (McKnight 1971:6), began to react against the freedom that commodity production offered to other classes, to young workers, and to women.

Although we know that gender hierarchy characterized the "medieval" or early-imperial China of the first millennium of the present era, much evidence suggests that the secular tendency in Chinese gender relationships has been toward greater female subordination over time. The "paradigmatic markers" of women's status — footbinding, concubinage, prostitution, and widow chastity and suicide — were strongest in the Qing and endured well into the twentieth century (Ropp 1976:5). The late-imperial gender system took shape in a highly visible struggle over the subordination of women that occurred during the Song. In this era, the relative equality of preceding centuries came under vigorous attack. This coincided with the emergence of petty-capitalist production as a major element in Chinese economy.

The seemingly "overdetermined" inferiority of women in China was not something timeless and inherent in Chinese culture any more than its class relations were fixed structures. Even with the relatively scanty data available on women in Chinese history, and even with our limited understanding of the economic aspects of that history, it seems possible to sketch an outline of the events that may have led both to women's characteristic position in late-imperial China and to the shape of the PCMP itself. Critical in this process was women's classic role as producers of textiles. As these women's products (along with so much else) became widely commoditized during the Song, women themselves became the subject of a Neo-Confucian counterattack.

Although aristocratic Chinese have practiced patrilineality for four thousand years, patrilineality in and of itself does not necessarily produce strongly patriarchal institutions and marked female subordination. In societies in which men describe themselves as completely culturally dominant, women, when they are asked, may have other (and supportable) interpretations of their political economy and of women's place in it (Goodale 1971; Feil 1987). Even Chinese patriarchy was not always so exclusive a tradition as to preclude the exercise of social power by women (Chang Kuang-chih 1980:89–90, 182).

The Song is a paradoxical period during which women's property rights may have been higher than at any other time (Ebrey 1993:6), but during which their autonomy came under the severest attacks. The ever more widely distributed custom of footbinding is the most vivid and the most material of the disabilities that increasingly constrained women; distance, familiarity, or exoticism should not disguise the horror of that custom or the degree of psychic and physical violence it brought into the supposed security of home life. Women were also the objects of a Neo-Confucian reassertion of the importance of female chastity (including lifelong monogamy even after widowhood) and a renewed emphasis on patrilineal inheritance. The severity of the attack, summed up in the Neo-Con-

fucianist synthesis that articulated the resurgent forces of a patriarchal political economy, is indicative of the degree to which women's independence threatened "order."

The most notable aspect of Song culture was its economic expansiveness. It was highly urbanized: about one-fifth of the population — close to 25,000,000 people — lived in cities and towns during the eleventh century (Chao Kang 1987:56). Commerce, handicraft, large-scale industry, and service trades flourished in cities and market towns over vast areas. The economy monetized as taxes largely ceased to be paid in kind; paper money was experimented with, along with other financial mechanisms and the beginnings of banking. Newly rich merchants vied openly for power and prestige with officials (Chao and Chen 1986:406). A money-oriented popular culture with capitalist elements expressed itself in folk religion (Hou 1975). Everywhere, signs of a sprouting capitalism spread through key regions (e.g. Shiba 1975). The self-sufficiency of natural economy disappeared in many regions, and commoditization permitted labor costs to be included in the determination of value (Haeger 1975:5). Song cities exhibited sharp class differentiation; housing the flamboyant rich but also "thousands upon thousands of men without settled occupations" (quoted in deBary et al. 1960:455).<sup>2</sup>

Progress in industry, one scholar notes, was exemplified in the silk trade,

the result of the impressive advances made in agricultural productivity. There grew up both a long-distance trade serving the expanding urban market and the manufacture of specialized goods in the cities. Certain areas began to specialize in the rearing of silkworms, speculative transactions in mulberry leaves made their appearance, merchants served the rural textile areas as middlemen and collectors of output, and merchant capital gradually extended its control over the villages. (Shiba 1970: 111)

Production was organized into a putting-out system and a complex network of rural and urban producers, retail shops, small local markets, storehouse proprietors, brokers, contractors, merchants, and peddlers. Finished silk was absorbed as tax payments, by overseas markets, and by consumers (168–69, 121).<sup>3</sup>

Anthropologists have observed the often-contradictory effects of similar relations of production on precapitalist societies encountering capitalism. Wealth is concentrated, and already-existing inequalities deepen. Land, labor, and cap-

2. These are the words of Cheng Hao, a famous Song Neo-Confucian, written as a memorial to the Shenzong Emperor (r. 1068–85) in criticism of the evils of his time.

3. The role the Song state played in stimulating silk production should not be ignored; taxes in silk products were heavy as Song officials paid off northern invaders. A treaty in 1004 required payment of 200,000 bolts of tribute silk (2,400 kilometers) to Liao princes to keep them at bay (D. Kuhn 1988:385, 409).

ital become commodities, a rough equality of the marketplace erodes the prestige or lowliness of hereditary status. Kinship ties are restructured as the young find jobs away from their families. Some women achieve greater equality. People gain new insight into the basis of class — either one owns means of production or one does not — so that class consciousness may begin to grow in those it disadvantages. Existing states and ruling classes are threatened, especially when, like those of the Song, they still depend on unfree labor and household patriarchy.

Unlike the emergence of capitalism in Europe, however, emergent capitalism in the Song, I contend, was met by a determined TMP counterrevolution whose misogynist values are epitomized in Neo-Confucian politico-familial philosophy (Chu and Lu 1967:272, 243, 179, 181, 188, 202). The Confucian revival was not merely a "cultural revolution" of values and style. It was aimed at containing the fundamental changes that capitalist-like economic activity were beginning to work on society. While Song officials emphasized the rectification of kinship and political systems, we must remember that these were economic systems at their foundation.

The Neo-Confucians drew on a reading of the Confucian classics colored by Buddhist ascetic rejection of pleasure to remodel a present they saw as decadent and luxurious after the upright virtues of a distant past. Neo-Confucianism, applied to contemporary life, or "things at hand," spoke directly about relations of production, envisioned as hierarchies within lineages constructed like miniature feudal states: "In order to control the minds of the people, unify one's kin, and enrich social customs so that people will not forget their origin, it is necessary to clarify genealogy, group members of the clan together, and institute a system of heads of descent." "Ancestral property must not be divided, but must be put in charge of one person." The ties among agnates must be maintained by ritual and the sharing of food (Chu and Lu 1967:228–29). Household kinship and property were as closely linked for Song Neo-Confucian thinkers as they are now for most Chinese: property relations are implicit in their discussions of kinship because kinship is largely defined and realized through the sharing of commonly held resources. Song writers in fact devoted considerable attention to such subjects as proper household management (e.g. Chang Ying in Beattie 1979:140–51; Ebrey 1984).

Late-imperial China's increasingly brutal and restrictive treatment of women in all classes undercut the growing potential for power that commodity production gave women. Women entered the Song from a position of strength based on their work in textiles. Earnings from weaving in highly commercialized seventeenth-century Suzhou suggest that this strength might have been considerable. A woman weaver could earn annually almost as much as her husband who was growing cash crops; silk weaving was four times as profitable as rice production (Rawski 1972:54–55). Although in earlier periods the production of textiles as tax-

in-kind gave official value to women's work (Bai 1982:253;<sup>4</sup> Sacks 1979:105), yarn and cloth production for market privatized their labor for a commodity market involving millions of people (D. Kuhn 1988:287-89, 314).

That Song fabrics were mass produced, even for commoners (Miyakawa 1969:7), is supported by the widespread use by the early 1300s of watermill-driven spinning machinery for hemp and ramie and of sophisticated multiple-spindle spinning wheels, bobbin winders, and silk-reeling machines during the Song (Needham 1965, 4 (2):404, 103-8, 269; D. Kuhn 1988). Private handicraft production reached its height then, when China had the biggest markets it would support till the twentieth century. Both state and private textile production were very great; city people could afford to waste cloth, and 70 percent of the remaining state in-kind tribute was in silks and cottons (Chao Kang and Chen Zhengyl 1986:500, 502, 503).

Textile makers labored under a variety of production regimes. Large government workshops produced textiles for the court; 2,214 people at one time worked in the city of Kaifeng in such factories, many of them involuntarily as part of the TMP. But these workshops supplied the government and its officials, not the huge working-class populations of China's many cities and towns (Chao and Chen 1986:137). Some women joined convents that specialized in weaving very fine silks; one of these held its own market every five days, selling its embroidered products throughout the country (Shiba 1970:113). Evidence for wage-labor workshops for this period is scarce and controversial, and may apply more to men than to women.<sup>5</sup> By the Southern Song, silk was raised in the countryside, but reeled and woven mostly in cities. Of the many textile producers, some were "loom households" — family industries passed on from father to son — while others were privately owned factories (Chao and Chen 1986: 503, 504) such as the one described in "The Weaver" (Peng Zheyi 1987:489-90). It seems likely that most Song women textile workers worked at home. The nature of that "home," then, might well have been a matter of dispute between productive textile workers and other family members.

Who was to control the labor of women textile producers — the multitude of spinners and weavers themselves or their male relatives? For later expansionary periods, we have some hints. In the sixteenth century, the cotton industry offered more work opportunities for women, and textile-related occupations broke down sex stereotyping. These changes provoked one official to "teach townspeople to differentiate their occupations according to sex." Forbidding women to go

4. Denis Twitchett, in an older interpretation, explains that although this division of labor represented the ideal of ancient practice, during the Tang (618-906 CE) women did not pay taxes (1963:26). I do not know how to resolve this disagreement.

5. For a rare and controversial Yuan-dynasty text describing weaving as wage work in which at least some workers are male, see Peng Zheyi 1987.

onto the streets, he insisted that only men be allowed to go to and fro among the houses or undertake capitalistic (*tzu-sheng*) enterprises: women, he instructed, should work only within the home (Handlin 1975:25-26). In the nineteenth century, when the opening of silk filatures in Guangzhou and of cotton mills in Zhejiang brought opportunities for independence to women, they quickly invented or borrowed social forms to meet their needs for security and sociability (Topley 1975; Sankar 1978, 1984; Honig 1986: chap. 8). Although these forms achieved considerable local acceptance, officials attempted to suppress them (Stockard 1989:110). One regional official wanted to force all women to live with their husbands (Sankar 1978:46).

A woman making textiles that could clothe the family, pay the taxes, and earn money on a commodity market had the possibility, at least, of bargaining power in her household. The literature on Song women still depends so largely on elite discourse that we do not know how the shift to textile commercialization affected women. The literati did not notice (Ebrey 1993:149). That a product so basic, so necessary, so endowed with cultural value, and so labor intensive should have been produced for an expanded market *without* that change affecting its primary producers, however, cannot be credited. Commercialization of textiles has been accomplished on the backs of young women everywhere it has occurred, and typically has resulted both in harsh controls on them and in their attempts to resist those controls (e.g. Hane 1982:170-205; Tsurumi 1994).

But an argument that the Song economic revolution affected women's economic integration into society need not depend only on speculation about women textile workers, whose labors and efforts at resistance were not accorded attention in contemporary chronicles. We may consider as well the probable effects of Song agricultural development, fundamental to the period's economic expansion, on gender relations. Here, we are guided by the incisive analyses of Ester Boserup, who has carefully examined the effects on women of commercialized agriculture in our own time.

Under such political-economic conditions, the introduction of complex multicrop agriculture intensifies the value of male-held land, making men more, and women less, important. Sophisticated agricultural techniques and cash cropping typically raise men's labor productivity, income, and status and lowers those of women. These tendencies are exacerbated as schooling for boys increases: a limited literacy spreads information from agricultural manuals and other such technical materials, but mostly to males. Additionally, as labor needs increase with agricultural intensification, women's role as reproducer, especially of sons, may be emphasized (Boserup 1970:56). Double and even triple cropping of grains, multiple cropping of foods and fibers, cash cropping, sophistication and intensification of land and labor use, and the spread of schooling and literacy were all notable features of the Song. That similar causes produced similar effects on Song gender relations in the Song capitalist-like setting is extremely likely. In

consequence, the potential advantages for women of their role in textile production may have been substantially lessened.

Chao Kang's description of landlord-tenant relations in the context of a commoditizing economy exemplify this possibility: "The high degree of mobility and freedom enjoyed by tenants in the early Sung triggered . . . the attempt by landlords to justify control over tenants and other types of farm labor supplies on ethical grounds. The landlord-tenant relationship was interpreted as a type of family kinship that was to be subject to the same set of familial ethics strongly advocated by the neo-Confucians of the Sung." He cites a twelfth-century author urging "vigorous punishment" for tenants who "perversely" refuse to "recognize the distinction between superior and inferior," who leave their master to set up an independent household, and who "are practicing commerce and not working hard at farming and sericulture" (1987:181-82).

A growing market for commodities offered women not just the chance to spin and weave to support nuclear families of their own choosing but the opportunity to set up noodle stands and wineshops and to enter the "water trades" as well-paid independent courtesans — as both Tang and Song women did (Schafer 1963:51; Yao 1983:86). How frequently did they do so? Women performed many kinds of work in the large and busy city of Hangzhou in the late Song, including embroidery, music, petty trading, accounting, and serving in and managing restaurants. One observer noted the relative equality of men and women in such small family businesses (Gernet 1962:148, 165), as it can be observed today in any Chinese setting. A Song traveler noted that women were frequently in charge of bringing goods to market:

When I saw the women of the back-country of Kuang-nan I wondered how they came to be so numerous and enjoy such well-being. The men have scrawny little bodies, and dark complexions and sad expressions. The married women are swarthy-skinned and plump, mostly in good health and very robust. Those who carry goods on their backs to peddle in search of profit in the cities and suburbs and in the periodic markets are all married women. Polygamy is general among the ordinary people [in this part of Guangdong], and all the wives take goods on their backs to sell in the markets in order to support their single husband. (Shiba 1970:152, quoting Zhou Chufei)

Sprouting capitalism in the Song must have affected men as well as women, of course. Young Chinese men, in the presence of even limited extrafamilial job opportunities, have sometimes successfully opposed their elders' wills in important matters. In one vivid example from Taiwan, the beginnings of Japanese industrialism early in this century enabled young men to rebel against parental enforcement of the entrenched custom of marrying adoptive sisters (A. Wolf and Huang 1980:193-201). In a tantalizing Song parallel,

during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the splitting up of families and the reduction of their numbers was particularly pronounced among the common people *because economic conditions were not in their favor* [italics mine]. Although it was something frowned upon as contrary to custom (and in these matters, it was the upper class families that set the tone), it was nevertheless common, in the countryside of Chekiang [a center of textile production], to find sons setting up on their own while parents were still alive. (Gernet 1962:148)

I suggest that it was not bad, but rather good, economic conditions that made it possible for young men to achieve early independence from their parents, as was the case in Europe under similar "protoindustrial" conditions. Both gender and sex hierarchies are threatened by an expanding economy, with kinship relations assuming new forms as they respond to new opportunities and decreased pressures of scarcity.

We do not know exactly what the many Song people engaged in protoindustrial cash cropping, commerce, services, and the handicraft industry chose to do with their new abundance. But we know what commoners were officially instructed to do as the Neo-Confucian synthesis emerged. Zhu Xi and his fellow Neo-Confucians restated patriarchal values as if they were attempting to reestablish the ideal TMP economy. This was a kin-based, agrarian system whose people — their property consolidated under responsible heads and well disciplined by the experience of family and lineage hierarchy — would respond obediently to state demands for taxes and labor service as in the preimperial good old days. They would do this, by implication, instead of running about building businesses, seeking profits, and acting independently of central authority and their parents.

A further speculation about the history of women, textiles, and Chinese political economy deserves consideration, though our current knowledge can generate no conclusions. Cotton began to replace hemp, ramie, silk, and lesser fibers as the textile staple during the Yuan. Its use spread rapidly, though it could not be cultivated everywhere. For daily use, cotton is much superior to the coarser forms of hemp and ramie, though skilled artisans produced some splendid hemp fabric for mosquito netting, and fine ramie "grasscloth" captivated Europeans as well as Chinese. Rough silks are hard-wearing but more costly than the hems. By the nineteenth century, homespun and handwoven cottons were worn even in minority highlands, and by most Chinese commoners. Some bought finished cloth; some, yarn, weaving it locally; some, raw cotton, spinning and weaving at home.

The distribution of these commodities depended not only on the suitability of natural conditions for cotton cultivation. People also had to be willing to commit extraordinary labor resources to cotton cultivation and processing. As Philip

Huang has shown, indigenous cotton production transforms social relations, especially those of gender (1985, 1990). In areas where ramie and hemp are alternatives to cotton, cotton textile production may require considerably larger total labor inputs, elderly women tell me. Ramie and hemp processing and twisting into thread are substantially less labor intensive than the spinning of cotton yarn, even after it is ginned. In some regions, women could clothe their families more speedily (if less comfortably) by persisting with the older fibers. But if women's labor time was of no great value, as in heavily populated areas with few alternative jobs for women, cotton might be exported very cheaply. It was preferred to locally produced hemp cloth in such areas West Fujian, where women could earn better returns as porters and so afford cotton.

Cotton became the standard Chinese fabric as people thought through complex calculations of the costs of growing and processing, transport, regional returns to female labor, and the combination of both tributary and petty-capitalist pressures on households. The events set in train by the Song commoditization of textiles surely have important sequelae for gender relations as cotton spread during the Yuan. But here speculation must stop in favor of continued research.

The PCMP is not capitalism, although it is capitalist-like. Its differences from capitalism result from the fact that it arose in a large and strong state in which the ruling class was capable of setting bounds to its expansionary tendencies. This idea is at least as old as Max Weber. But how that containment was effected must be related to the wide variety of Song cultural changes in women's status as well as to kinship, to ideology, and to many other social institutions. Although the TMP and the PCMP continued to "struggle" (in the persons of officials and petty capitalists) over who would control surpluses, the economic practices of each remained firmly based on the subordination of women.

#### THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF POPULATION GROWTH

Taken as a whole, the class and gender relations described above did not lead to economic transformation: over the long run, population grew as fast as productivity. Yet population growth that keeps up with or outstrips rising productive capacity must itself be explained; and the dialectical growth of both on a Chinese scale has significant consequences.

The people of late-imperial China began to reproduce themselves at ever-higher rates in two distinct spurts: during the Song and again during the late Ming. Major additions to the food-crop and agricultural-technique repertoires occurred during these periods; it is generally agreed that, without these new styles of agriculture, the population growth rates that accompanied them could not have been sustained (Ho Ping-ti 1954:183-89). Yet the availability of new and demanding techniques of agriculture does not oblige people to use them; the

possibility of new lands or new niches in settled country does not force people to populate them thickly. To understand the human potential for explosive population growth, we must know how people organize themselves for production and exchange. To assume that an abundance of food will automatically result in the rearing of large families and a rapid rise in population is plainly wrong as Marvin Harris and Eric Ross have shown (1987).

Just such an assumption is commonly made in Chinese studies, however (e.g. Philip Huang 1985:17). Mark Elvin pictures an ever-tightening trap of intensification brought about through population pressure leading to more need for laborers who in turn must work more intensely to wring a living out of a fixed land base (1973). Chao Kang has made population growth the prime mover of his interpretation of Chinese history. He contends that by Ming times, the population reached a potential for growth sufficient to compensate rapidly for the ravages of late-imperial invasions, wars, rebellions, plagues, famines, and disasters (1987:41-42). Elvin's argument shows its greater sophistication in his assumption that something must prompt rapid population growth, Chao's in its insight that the pattern of population growth affects the political-economic unit, the empire, or *guojia*, as a unit. Neither takes sufficient account of the effect on population growth of TMP demands; both assume too easily that human populations have a natural, and high, rate of growth.

Much recent anthropological research indicates that this assumption is not so. Studies among !Kung foragers (Howell 1979), New Guinea horticulturalists (Heider 1991:84-87), and Indian peasants (Mamdani 1972), to cite only a few, show that societies make very different choices about the size and spacing of their families, sometimes producing few children even without modern contraception, and many children even when it is easily available.

Thomas C. Smith shows that in Japan, with technology, crop inventory, and cultural institutions not markedly different from those of the Chinese, population growth rates at some times and places were the lowest known for preindustrial, complex societies, and birth spacing was long — 2.6 years from marriage to first child, and 4.4 years from first to second, followed by periods from 3.2 to 4.2 years. Later Tokugawa Japan (1700 to 1867) was a period of virtual stagnation in population growth despite considerable economic growth, much of the control apparently resulting from infanticide (1977:7-10, 60, 80).

Between 100 BPE and about the year 800, there were about 50 to 60 million Chinese. The population then grew to a high of about 120 million by 1100, fell back to 60 million by the late fourteenth century, returned to a possible high of 200 million by 1592, 300 million at 1800, 427 million in 1848 (from Chao 1987:41) and onward ever more rapidly thereafter to over 1.2 billion in 1994. The fourteenth-century drop reflects the violence and disruption of the eighty-eight-year Yuan (Mongol) dynasty and its overthrow by the Chinese. The later population growth should not obscure the earlier stability. It stands as impor-

tant evidence of a culture that was significantly different from the one that took shape in the Song.

What is the meaning of this difference? Chao Kang interprets it — mistakenly, I believe — as follows:

The crucial turning point finally occurred when, after steady growth for 150 years during the Northern Sung, the population surpassed previous peaks by a sizeable margin so that major wars and natural disasters became relatively less destructive. The only reason China survived the onslaught of the Mongols in the thirteenth century was, as Perkins points out, that the Mongol armies were too small and the Chinese population too large. Consequently, demographic development began to show cyclical movements upward around a rising trend line. (1987:42; and see Perkins 1969:197)

That is, he claims, China finally reached a population base level capable of absorbing even very large demographic insults. This unconvincing hypothesis assumes that while the post-Song population would grow, its capacity for military and Malthusian self-destructiveness would remain limited. Certainly it takes less time and effort to kill people, or for them to die of the diseases of poverty and crowding, than it does to rear reproducing adults, as was proved during the Yuan; civil wars are notoriously more destructive than invasions. Indeed, just such behavior is responsible, Chao argues, for the pre-Song stability at 50 to 60 million.

The high growth rate sustained from the Song forward was more likely to have been the consequence of the invention of a more demanding political economy than of having crossed some demographic Rubicon. In the tributary mode, the Song ruling class created organizational forms sufficiently powerful that most external enemies could be excluded, most internal war could be contained, and at least some of the losses from famine averted. These strong governments were also more even-handed extractors of taxes; more households contributed to state coffers. In the petty-capitalist mode, markets for commodities and the labor power that produced them made it reasonable for people to rear more children than the household needed to work its means of production. Not scale but structure was crucial in giving China's demographic trajectory a new form.

High fertility (the bearing of large numbers of infants) does not necessarily result in large families and/or rapid population growth; intentional or accidental mortality may be high as well, resulting in small families and slow population growth. Although birth and death are conceptual opposites, they are intimately linked by human decision-making. Social circumstances shape a range of choices in the care of newborns from fierce protectiveness and parental self-sacrifice to pragmatic and even eager infanticide. In low-technology societies, little can be done to help the naturally infertile or low-fertile to bear more children, but sexual abstinence, sexual distaste (A. Wolf and Huang Chieh-shan 1980), long postpartum sexual taboos, and the underfeeding and overworking of women readily

reduce fertility through cultural means. In low-technology societies as in high-tech ones, we all die, but mortality can be easily increased as the lives of the very young are extinguished by infanticide or by a host of practices not intentionally aimed at causing death. Little girls reared as foster daughters-in-law in Taiwan died at almost twice the rate of home-reared daughters (A. Wolf 1995:305); deliberate infanticide was common in many parts of China (Dickemann 1979, 1984).

When a population remains stable over a long period, as did the pre-Song Chinese, high mortality *may* be the cause. If, however, each woman reared only half a dozen out of the dozen or more she might "naturally" bear, population growth rates would soar. When they do not, we must suspect that people — probably women — are choosing smaller families. Limits to population growth lie within the capabilities of all cultures.

When a population increases rapidly under low-technology conditions, as China's did after the Song, we may be seeing the results of one or several kinds of change. The increase may have been made possible by higher fertility caused by earlier menarche and childbearing and by later menopause (better nutrition?), or by changes in sexual habits. It may have been due to a decrease in mortality brought about, perhaps, by improved nutrition or changes in public health. Population growth may be the consequence of such changes. But it may also result from the conscious strategy to keep and care for, rather than to abandon, more children. Population growth requires that women both bear *and* rear more babies. Unwillingness to rear many children is a common phenomenon among hard-pressed peoples, described in painful detail for poverty-stricken Brazilians (Scheper-Hughes 1992); in almost identical fashion (for girls) in south China (Fielde 1894:24; quoted in A. Wolf and Huang Chieh-shan 1980:230); and strongly hinted at in the Shandongnese locution "children are the oppressors of the family." In that dirt-poor province, "during all the time that children are 'in arms,' the treadmill of absolutely necessary work is interrupted, and with the interruption the small but indispensable family income diminishes or disappears" (A. Smith 1965:300).

Changes in fertility in the strict demographer's sense cannot account for changes in population growth rate which began to occur in China during the Song. The careful debates about China's late-imperial-period fertility patterns (see Coale 1985; A. Wolf 1985a) are of great importance for our grasping the dimensions of China's current population problem. This problem is exacerbated by the actions of a state powerful enough to interfere with women's and their families' choices about whether to rear newborns; infanticide is a crime in China today. But late-imperial rulers did not have this power. For most of history, when conscious action as well as "natural" mortality easily set limits to the number of children reared, variations in fertility per se do not, I think, explain population surges. Whether one agrees with a group of Princeton demographers that early-twentieth-century Chinese farm families had "very low" fertility (for an agrarian society) of between

about four and six and one-half births for each woman (Barclay et al. 1976:625), or with Arthur Wolf, who on the basis of more accurate records argues for rates 5 to 15 percent higher, averaging six births for each woman (1985a:168, 185), does not help greatly in unraveling the reasons for the rise in population beginning in the Song. That rise may have resulted as much from choices to keep more of the babies born as from a decline in natural deaths and/or an increase in natural fertility. Although we will never be able to recover sufficient evidence to demonstrate the role human decision making played in these thousand-year-old events, we should at least attempt to understand the political-economic pressures that may have motivated them, and the particular role of women in realizing them.

Whatever the cultural pressures to rear more children, behavior that encourages higher fertility always comes at a biological price paid by women alone. Although women in many cultures take pride in bearing six, nine, a dozen children, I doubt that there exists a woman anywhere for whom maternal joy obscures entirely the enormous demands that bearing and rearing such a family makes on her body, her time, and her spirit. A widespread distaste for what Chinese women are taught to see as their highest good — fecundity — is contradictorily codified in folk beliefs about the pollution of intercourse and childbirth (Ahern 1975) and the purity and pleasure of the celibate life (Sankar 1978:256–57).

It may be argued — many Chinese women would so argue — that women especially need children for emotional and economic support and are thus motivated to rear as many as they can. A woman's own interests depended heavily on her establishing a "uterine family" (M. Wolf 1972) of children, especially sons, who would be her emotional and material supports throughout life. Chinese mothers are often very direct about the utility of having children. For many and obvious reasons, women wanted children in spite of the burdens they entailed.

The real question for an understanding of population growth, however, is "How *many* children?" do families, and women themselves, think are enough? For late-imperial China, Arthur P. Wolf stands with the majority in answering, "As many as possible." "Where Japanese peasants made the family fit the farm, the Chinese assumed they would somehow make the farm fit the family" (1985a:177–78). Yet Arthur Wolf and Huang Chieh-shan have also shown how Taiwan women radically reshaped their households by allocating newborns to make the family fit both present and future material needs, especially through adoption (1980). How, in the Song, did women shift from a level of childrearing at which the population did not rise sharply to one at which it did? Commoditization, agricultural intensification, and the resulting increased demand for labor — all must have increased pressure on women for early and unremitting maternity, defined womanly virtue as dependency, rewarded passivity with prestige, and undermined women's capacities to support themselves. Because, during the Song, these pressures occurred in a context of relative opportunity and freedom for women, the "persuasion" must have been intense.

Official and Neo-Confucian sources, eager to instruct on the minutiae of ritual, on how much interest to charge for loans, on the education of the young, and on moral and practical matters of innumerable kinds, are profoundly silent on sex. By comparison with Chinese high literati texts, the Old Testament or the Q'uran is a veritable *Kinsey Report* of what to do and not do sexually. On the relation between wife and husband, as on every other social subject, Neo-Confucianists had but a single idea: harmony comes when inferiors obey superiors. This imperative must have translated, in the behavior of the bedroom, into sexual obedience. Women were not to refuse or delay marriage or to deny their husbands intercourse in order to postpone or to space pregnancies. That a life-long sacrifice of adult sexuality was expected of widows, even those who were teenage virgins, is proof enough of both the desire and the power of official culture to annihilate women's choices about sexuality.

What explains such ferocity against human desires that, like hunger, arise from biochemical springs and are strong in both sexes? Part of the answer, no doubt, lies in the need to assure that women will not bear the *wrong* babies: children without fathers from whom to learn skills and inherit resources, children who, in a patrilineal context, will rob legitimate children of their patrimony. But in China (and other highly commoditized "peasant" societies such as those of the Mediterranean, Islamic, and Hindu worlds), there was pressure to devalue and detach a woman's sexuality from herself as an active agent. This pressure arose, I believe, in the interests of maximizing her reproductive capacity for her husband's family, and to oblige a woman to bear more children than her own immediate interests might dictate.

Chinese households were under constant pressure to meet their own subsistence, replacement, and ceremonial needs along with state demands for tribute, as peasants must (E. Wolf 1966:9–10). In addition, however, they were obliged to compete in a market for the factors of production. The more commercialized the economy, the more active the market, the easier it was to lose or gain land, animals, and other means of production. Labor power was a poor family's last resort, its only hope of retaining or gaining property. Such a strategy is effective, however, only when adult children are firmly bound to their parents, as by the Confucian state. The production of laborers was a woman's job. From children came the labor to pay rent and taxes, and, if a market existed for their labor, to accumulate the tiny capital from which the family might eventually grow rich. A truncated, "petty" capitalism enabled reproductively lucky and economically agile households to expand and prosper. Under conditions of low technology, households were forced by the market to define prosperity in terms of multiplication of family members as well as of expansion of capital. Such a set of conditions implies that a secular or temporary or regional growth in the market brought corresponding pressure to bear on women to submit themselves to sexual and childbearing routines governed more and more by patricorporate needs

and less and less by personal choice. Where petty capitalism flourished, we should expect to see special efforts exerted by patricorporations and their ally, the state, to enforce women's submission to extreme pronatalism as well as to labor discipline.

In some historical circumstances, population pressure may have forced intensification and hence the rise of a market for labor power. In others, the expansion of market exchange encouraged parents to rear more of the children they bore so as to benefit from their wages. For China, we are not likely to find data that reduce the dialectic of population growth and market expansion to a clear-cut causal relationship. But for China, as for other agrarian societies with strong states, a third factor may be of considerable significance as a prime mover. That factor was state demand.

#### STATE INTENSIFICATION OF PRODUCTION

The TMP vision of the Chinese ruling class is not expansionary in the way a capitalist or PCMP vision is. Chinese officials did have standards of efficiency, however, which they saw as ideals to be impressed upon the populace. Where triple cropping was possible, rural folk should triple crop or be condemned as lazy and disloyal. Where land lay uncultivated, it should be worked so as to supply state revenues. Where people were thin on the ground, they should multiply into a dense and docile labor force.

Peter Perdue's impressive account of land:people relationships in Ming and Qing Hunan is a vivid example of this process (1987). In the late Ming, with abundant food and land, Hunanese families saw no need to engage in the back-breaking labor of double cropping or to rear the large families necessary to do so. Although an active market in grain created inequities among commoners, they had other options. Through work in forests, mines, and frontiers, they could escape state demands and petty-capitalist competition by taking up a subsistence life. The state, unable to force the intensification of double cropping on an unwilling population, clearly had weak regional influence; tributary demands were relatively easy to evade. In consequence, the double pressures that account for surges of population and of economic intensification were absent — and population remained low.

The creation of a balance between land and people, between means of production and labor, was a constant preoccupation of officials. Hong Liangji, a Qing scholar-official, described the means available to this end: "To have all land utilized and the people exert themselves to the utmost; to move people into newly opened fields in the border lands; to reduce taxes, where they have increased in weight and number, so as to bring them into line with former levels; to prohibit extravagance and stop the monopolizing of land; to open the government granaries in times of flood, drought, and pestilence and give the people food" (de-

Bary et al. 1960:625). Hong's list omits one method officials had long used to fill up available lands with cultivators and to pressure them into intensified production of food and fibers, the practice of granting arable land to soldier-settlers (de-Bary 1960:596; Philip Huang 1985:85–86; Perdue 1987:94–95).

Whether military or civilian, immigrants received instructions (sometimes ignored) on many matters from officials bent on expanding the tax base. A fifteenth-century official "intended to have tenants as well as landlords pay tax or contribute labor according to their ability, and he ordered single men and women to marry according to their local customs, bringing in spouses from Jiangxi. His goal was to encourage the increase of population in Huguang and to open up uncultivated land, while maintaining careful registration of the population and ensuring tax revenues for the government" (Perdue 1987:102).

Chinese rulers had at least two important motives for attempting to standardize production (and social life) by filling up sparsely settled regions. Dense — but not *too* dense — populations produced more revenue. Lands fully settled enabled imperial methods of social control to work more effectively. The expenses of governance could be paid out of local revenues, and mutual surveillance by commoners was more likely to work well. Chinese officials may well have taken seriously their mission of expanding a civilizing sense of hierarchy and cosmic order among the unpolished commoners. Even if they had not, however, revenue enhancement and administrative convenience would have engendered similar policies.

By filling up their landscapes with labor-intensive styles of farming and by pressuring their people for higher production, Chinese officials pushed agriculturalists onto a narrow survival base. Striving to survive through protoindustrial efforts, people constantly reinvented petty capitalism. The prime mover of the intimately linked pulses of population and market expansion which mark the Song and Ming lay not in some natural law of demography but in household production firmly harnessed by the rigid and demanding policies of a strong tributary system.

# 4

## Cities and Space

Heaven high, clouds light  
watching wild geese  
fly south and disappear.  
Only heroes will reach the Great Wall.  
Counting up, we have walked twenty thousand *li*.  
— Mao Zedong, in southern Gansu,  
near the end of the Long March in 1935

Thus far, I have described the dynamic of late-imperial Chinese society as arising from several sources of motion: the struggle between people, and sometimes classes, to maintain the TMP or to expand the sphere of the PCMP; the contest for control of women's labor; and the expansion of population, itself a response to political-economic and gender inequalities. Another, less abstract form of motion played an important role in the making of Chinese culture: the physical dispersal and settlement of people in space. The pattern of urban settlement owes most, I would argue, to the choices of China's ruling class in its attempts to maintain the TMP. Such a conclusion meets Arthur P. Wolf's challenge "to account for the fact that Chinese culture remained heterogeneous despite creating and supporting a hierarchical system in which the behavior of those at each level served as compelling models for those at the next lower level" (1989b:318). Emphasis on the persistent hegemony of the TMP should supplant the focus on a naturalistic market model which has dominated Chinese studies for some decades.

It is a truism that the larger and more complex things become, the more possibilities there are that a thread will snap, an edge unravel. Class societies are delicate: their breaks occur, rarely, as the result of natural disaster, more often from humanly instigated calamity. A network of canals is built wrong, or in the wrong place, or is wrongly maintained: floods come, people starve, new migrants replace them. The population is pressured into extremes of intensification: hills are deforested, drought follows floods, pandemics and starvation decimate the re-

gion. Hungry, angry, and outrageously exploited people rise, kill officials, burn cities, and are slaughtered by imperial soldiers. The government builds a new city, settles it forcibly with troops, trades with tribals; the region is sinicized, canalized, deforested, overpopulated, hungry, angry. The government piles up part of a Great Wall, killing uncounted workers; it digs a Grand Canal, wreaking ecological disaster on its downwater side, drawing migrants, and seeding commercial centers.

The Chinese that many Westerners think of as home-bound, stuck in great-grandfather's mud, must have been rare. People in vast numbers were constantly on the move to survive the consequences of a system that constantly was disequibrated by its inherent inequalities. Ordinary folk moved, when they could, to seize land poorly defended by local tribal people, depopulated by flood, plague, and famine, or laid waste through imperial vengeance after an uprising. Sometimes they simply came to town, looking for work.

The movements of state populations as they responded to natural events and to the workings of their unequal and thus poorly balanced political economies were important both in themselves and as they revealed the motion in such abstractions as classes and modes of production. Regionally, in the short run, such movement was chaotic, sometimes telling us little but that some periods were "peaceful" or "turbulent." In China, however, there have been two secular trends in the dispersion of people: a southward movement of Han people into more and more corners of east Asia, and the clustering of people into urban hierarchies.

The southward movement of Han people, but especially of Han culture, has been heavily overemphasized in the past, mainly for ideological reasons. Archaeology and logic increasingly combine to reveal the age and complexity of non-Han settlement in what is now China. China's "march to the tropics" was a movement partly of people but much more of a particular social formation, the rulers of which absorbed, reorganized, and learned from indigenes as they subjugated them. A great deal of China's territory, even that of the old "eighteen provinces" — excluding the vast, sparsely populated, and feebly held west — was not truly drawn into the main currents of empire. If there was nothing much for officials either to take or to defend, a region might remain for centuries part of China in only a very nominal sense. This is true of many of China's hilly regions, especially in the south.

The movement of people into cities, however, has been essential to the operation of China's political economy and hence its culture. China's late-imperial urbanization has been the subject of very considerable scholarly attention, most particularly by G. William Skinner, whose 1964–65 model of Chinese marketing leads directly into his several essays on urbanization in a 1977 volume, and to more recent restatement (1985). Skinner's investigations of urbanization and marketing — which at first he viewed as nearly identical — drew together a mass of information about the spatial distribution of cities, along with illuminating analyses of

what that distribution might imply. His argument was based on central-place theory, which implies that Chinese cities functioned primarily as market centers in an economy in which the profit-seeking distribution of commodities was the main motive and in which transport networks based on profit-loss considerations were limited by natural topographies. These central assumptions about Chinese political economy are shared by many other Western China scholars and are thus worthy of special scrutiny. They introduce classically bourgeois and thus inappropriate distortions into our understanding of the movements of Chinese people in space.

In his essays in *The City in Late Imperial China*, Skinner, building on his earlier articles on marketing and social structure (1964, 1965a, 1965b), sets out to demonstrate that Chinese cities have been spaced across the landscape primarily because of their role as commercial centers. Reasons of state for the building of cities were secondary to those of commerce because "it was efficient for political institutions to focus on commercial centers in their efforts to control and regulate the means of exchange and (indirectly) of production, and to tap . . . wealth" (1977a:276). Even "the formal administrative attributes of capital cities stemmed in large part from their place in the relevant regional system of economic central places" (1977c:254). These economic central places formed "the 'natural' structure of Chinese society — a world of marketing and trading systems, informal politics, and nested subcultures dominated by officials-out-of-office, nonofficial gentry, and important merchants" (1977a:275).

Skinner begins his analysis with central-place theory, which "in the strict sense is concerned solely with retailing." To this emphasis he adds concerns for urban positioning in "the structure of distribution channels connecting economic centers [and places] in the transport network." "Retailing" is specified for us as including "consumer demand [enabling] the supplier to earn normal profits" (1977a:276–77). For Skinner, cities are principally markets for exchanges that generate "normal profits." He assumes that virtually everyone was in the market, arguing that even villages are located vis-à-vis one another and nearby towns to maximize the ease of transporting goods for trade.

Skinner's insistence that sinologists should take market relations seriously is extremely important for our understanding of Chinese cities and spatial relations. That the power of commodity production transforms society is an argument of great significance for theory, for our understanding of history, and for predictions about China's future. As a proof that the Chinese created cities primarily because of profit-seeking exchange relations, however, Skinner's book-within-a-book fails. Its central assumption, that "the market" in China behaved as it does in the capitalist mode of production, shaping and dominating all other systems, is untenable. It fails too because Skinner, who is well aware of the political implications of the economics of commerce, virtually ignores the economic power of the political processes he subsumes as administration. The functional-

ist dichotomy he draws between the economic and the political incapacitates his analysis. Only a political-economic approach can capture the complexities of even simple social formations. Even in times when the Chinese state was weak, it often acted powerfully and acted in disregard of notions of profit, or even of human life.

Skinner's 1964–65 work on marketing systems in the Sichuan Basin applies the work of Walter Christaller<sup>1</sup> to that region and hypothesizes its implications for all of China. Perhaps in response to criticisms such as those by Lawrence W. Crissman (1973) (which Skinner does not cite), in his 1977 essays (especially 1977a), Skinner moves from the hypothetical unbounded plain of Christallerian central-place theory to an accommodation to China's rugged and varied geography. He divides the country into nine physiographic macroregions structured around natural rivers as the primary means of transport. This modification brings the data into closer alignment with the predictions of pure central-place theory. It ties his work too to the important study "China's Key Economic Regions" by Ch'i Ch'ao-ting (1936).

We may apply G. K. Zipf's rank/size rule — another test of the relative development of marketing systems (1949) — to show that Chinese cities as a group are anomalously patterned. Their arrangement indicates that China as a whole did not form an integrated marketing hierarchy — as much other evidence also indicates. The nine macroregions, Skinner argues, were just such integrated systems, although the degree of integration varied from region to region. Division into macroregions thus appears to solve the question of why the overall placement of cities did not conform to Christallerian geometries: there was no unified, all-China hierarchy, and regional hierarchies were sharply modified by the availability of water transport.

These two factors (pure central-place logic modified by the profit-seeking use of water transport) still fall short as predictors of Chinese urban locations. So Skinner ingeniously adds another variable (drawn perhaps from Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems approach): Each macroregion has a core and a periphery; cores begin with natural advantages that are strengthened through the familiar process of underdeveloping their peripheries, or hinterlands. This process affects city placement in a variety of ways.

Underdevelopment occurs through unequal transfers between core and periphery. Skinner gives an interestingly chosen example: the soil fertility (and hence agrarian output) in cores increases as hinterland products, notably timber, are concentrated in central places and as human wastes from hinterland food-stuffs are retained for use on fields in the close vicinity of cores. He ignores the more general insights about the social inequality that the core/periphery trope implies. We know that wealth of all kinds was transferred from Chinese periph-

1. And many others; see Skinner's list of references on page 717n7 (1964).

eries to Chinese cores, usually through the actions either of officials or of petty capitalists. Unless China was very unlike other class societies, we know that these humans were more efficient and interesting creators of inequality than the unmotivated drift of wood and sewage. As the Chinese proverb puts it, "Water flows down to lower places, but people flow up to richer places" (in Goldstein 1987:915).

Skinner's acute perception of the humanly constructed nature of an apparently "natural" and extremely important factor of production — rich soils — points our attention to a significant weakness in his analysis of physiographic macroregions. His explanation of the patterning of Chinese cities depends on the transport costs of goods; these are substantially lessened near natural waterways suitable for transport. Certainly, in preindustrial society, the latter point is true. But Skinner virtually ignores the artificial patterning of such transport found in all ancient agrarian states and dramatically exemplified in China. Although he inserts some qualifications of this naturalism, referring briefly to draining swampy lowlands and a sophisticated technology applied to water transport (1977d:12–13), the tenor of argument and the preponderance of data ignore the extreme artificiality of the Chinese transport system. For thousands of years, powerful ruling officials designed, extracted the resources to construct, and ordered built extensive communications networks in their realms. They reshaped rivers, imposed canalization on unlikely topographies, and cut roads. There is probably nowhere on earth that serves less well than China as an example of the shaping of human life by raw nature.

Lyman P. Van Slyke reminds us of the importance in Chinese water transport of official engineering on a grand scale. The Ling Qu, or Miracle Canal, was the world's earliest contour transport canal. It linked the Xiang River, via the Yangzi to the north, with the Gui River, which flows to Guangzhou, China's southernmost port. Begun in the third century BPE, it was most effectively managed during the Tang and Song. Built first for military use, it became mainly an artery for tax grain, which during the Tang crept north in thirty-five-ton barges (1988:60). An early-seventeenth-century Dutch map (Vertente et al. 1991:61), dense along its route with settlement names, reveals what a major highway this remained at the end of the Ming.

The better-known Grand Canal was the result of Sui (581–618 PE) and later official efforts to draw tax grain directly from the Yangzi Valley, first to medieval capitals on difficult-to-navigate stretches of the Yellow River and, after the fourteenth century, to Beijing. Its initial portion, the Bian Canal, ran from the head of the Yangzi estuary to Xi'an. The five-hundred-mile Yongqi Canal connected the Yellow River with the frontier area of what later became Beijing; a second major feeder, 215 miles long, joined the city of Hangzhou to the Yangzi. Van Slyke describes how, between the years 600 and 610, Sui rulers mobilized two to three million workers for this construction, including women, "males having been used up by the combined demands of agriculture, war, and corvée labor." The

completely new Yongqi Canal, on which women labored, "was designed to radiate political and military power outward from the capital districts, rather than to transport resources inward to the capital area." In the fourteenth century, the Yellow River having shifted its course, and the Yuan dynasty rulers their capital, a new version of the northern feeder was cut through the North China Plain. As in the Bian Canal, stretches of natural river were incorporated wherever possible, but even these often required substantial improvement and management. This "new" Grand Canal ran one thousand miles, from Hangzhou to Beijing, crossing two major rivers and many lesser ones and running athwart the generally east-west grain of the natural terrain (1988:69–73).

The heaviest use of old and new Grand canal was for the one-way shipment of tax grain by officials in charge of government revenues and by merchants franchised by them. The quantities were vast, with storage facilities along the way such as a Sui granary with a capacity of over thirty million bushels. And, Van Slyke tells us, it was "inordinately expensive; in the early nineteenth century, the Ch'ing authorities may have been spending 15 million ounces of silver, nearly a quarter of their total income, for [the transport and management of tribute grain]" (74–75). In the Yellow River conservancy, immense sums were expended to keep the water level deep enough in season so that tribute grain barges could pass. This expense made the grain extremely costly, but the costs fell on those who did corvée on the dikes or provided staggering quantities of grain stalks for their revetments (Dodgen 1991:42, 41). Although Beijing officials objected to the price of such transport, tribute grain was not a commodity on the market. The obstacles of market conditions, transport costs, and the natural lay of the land were overridden in the interests of the TMP.

The use of sea transport for such shipments on the northern half of China's east coast was not seriously attempted in large part because, according to Van Slyke, "the Grand Canal had become a morass of vested interests. The bureaucracy in charge, one of the three great superintendencies (along with the Yellow River Conservancy and the Salt Administration, had become a Byzantine maze of corruption, patronage, and theft, harder to clean out than the silt that continually clogged the canal. The sea route — to which there might be, of course, legitimate objections — challenged these vested interests, and was thus strenuously opposed" (1988:76). Because a central goal of those who managed the TMP was the pumping of surplus from nonofficial to official pockets, the only real problem here was in the eyes of the highest officials, who thought their cut should be bigger and used for different purposes.

The centrality of natural waterways on which much of Skinner's argument rests is also called into question by the history of Ningbo. By late-imperial times, Ningbo was an extremely important commercial city in Zhejiang province, with what appears to be an ideal location in the Hangzhou estuary. The city achieved its importance only after it became the effective southern terminus of the Grand

Canal, which stimulated economic development throughout the lower Yangzi (Shiba 1977:392). This is not a Europe, a continent of small, separate states, but an empire in which tributary unity shaped other forms of integration. When waterways were constructed on a large scale, the decision makers were not private entrepreneurs concerned for profit and loss but Chinese officials interested in the transport of troops and taxes and in the manufacture of lucrative official posts.

The same can be said about land routes. Although water transport was unquestionably more efficient, where it was important for official communications to go overland, overland they went. Officials could send important messages by road at the rate of from 100 to 175 miles a day (Skinner 1977c:270), far faster than water transport. Skinner's work on Sichuan cities also underscores the importance of roads. He concludes that "the structure of the river system virtually determined the siting of the region's higher-level economic centers and that major roads had the effect of compensating for deficiencies of the river system in linking those cities" (1977a:291-93).

But it is not as apparent as all that. As Skinner himself points out, Chengdu, without important water links, was "unequivocally the central metropolis, and Chungking [on the Yangzi — H.G.] merely a regional metropolis" (1977a:290). Only the radical shift in Yangzi trade brought about by its mechanization and internationalization, combined with warlord politics, resulted in the reversing of commercial roles for these two cities in the 1920s. Chengdu remained, and remains, the capital, quite probably for the reason it has been so for most the last two thousand years. Hard to reach by water, it is the agricultural beneficiary of the remarkable flood-control-and-irrigation works at Du Jiang Yan, built in the third century B.P.E. Through Chengdu are channeled the almost geomantic benefits of a magnificent piece of Han-dynasty engineering, still in use after nearly two thousand years, as pointed an example of tributary-mode shaping of human settlement as one might hope to find. James Lee documents the elaborate efforts Chinese states, especially during the Qing, made to expand the road network in Sichuan (1990, chap. 3).

Over time, the emerging data have moved Skinner away from his initial emphasis on commerce as the primary factor in urban placement. Much of "Cities and the Hierarchy of Local Systems" is an extended interpretation of what Skinner sees as a separate hierarchy of capital cities. Finding Chinese officials canny in their adaptation to shifts in commerce, he also gives considerable attention to the differing official concerns for revenue collection and defense as these influenced the size and hierarchical ratings of administrative areas. By the end of his series of papers in *The City in Late Imperial China*, Skinner writes of class relations between merchants and gentry as very nearly the key to understanding the spatial relationships of urbanites within their cities and of "class and occupation (complexly interrelated)" and regional hierarchy as coequal determinants of China's "basic cultural cleavages" (1977e:269). He goes further yet in the direction I urge

in this book in a 1985 paper on changes in marketing structures since the 1949 revolution in China, noting that both "market" and "redistributive" tendencies are at work in contemporary China.

In "Cities and the Hierarchy of Local Systems," Skinner confronts the state more directly: "I am led to conclude that Ch'ing field administration was marvelously adapted to the realities of regional structure within the empire. . . . These findings effectively dispose of the notion that cities in imperial China were but microcosms of empire, more or less uniform creations of an omnipotent state. Rather, they give evidence of skilled husbanding and deployment of the limited bureaucratic power that a premodern court could effectively control (1977a:344-45).

But Skinner sees administration where we might better see tributary political economy. If it is useful to see the Chinese social formation as two articulated modes of production, the economic functions of most central places included both those of petty capitalism and those of tribute. We can separate central places into capitals and noncapitals, as Skinner does, but in doing so we will have separated neither economy nor administration. Material resources, including labor power, moved in two separable circuits (PCMP and TMP) in every administrative unit from the household up to the empire. So too did the control of persons, accomplished both by easily visible administrative actors (from household heads to magistrates to the big brass of Beijing) and by the more subtle mechanisms that added their increment to the maintenance of class hegemony. These ranged from the ties of common interest Skinner emphasizes between merchants and gentry (1977e) to the complexities of folk ideology, such as the bureaucratic organization of even villagers' gods.

Painstaking empirical attempts to weigh the importance of commerce versus administration based on the distinction between capitals and noncapitals run into difficulties. In analyzing 1,549 central places with yamens as evidence for the dominance of commerce, Skinner omits eighty county-level units from extremely peripheral areas, thus skewing his data in the direction of his hypothesis (1977a:302n). These presumably had some form of administration, but doubtless very little commerce. He also omits an "arguably . . . still lower level of administration [which] existed in embryonic form." Certain county-level units contained subdistricts (*ssu*) whose "capitals" were towns where a special category of deputy magistrate (*hsun-chien*) served. This may be an important omission. Rowe (1984:32) informs us that Hubei had sixty-eight *xun-jian* (*hsun-chien*) during the Qing. Because such towns typically ranked "among the most important within their counties" (Skinner 1977a:303n), it would appear that their inclusion too would weaken the case for commercial primacy which Skinner is attempting to establish. Table 20 in "Cities and the Hierarchy of Local Systems" (1977a:340), which purportedly demonstrates that administrative centers were distributed by their importance in an "economic" hierarchy, is a far less clear-cut demonstration of his point than Skinner takes it to be.

But the problem of proof lies not in a few details of analytical technique, a few percentage points here and there. It lies in the fact that it is extremely difficult, probably impossible, to separate the urbanizing effects of the quite different movements of surplus value and of tribute with the data at hand. Yue Zumou, using historical and archaeological evidence, has demonstrated the priority of defense in locating China's cities up through the Han (1994). We might explore a large number of Song and post-Song cities in this fashion to learn whether they were founded on a state commitment to waterworks (like Chengdu), or defense, or ethnic preference for a familiar home region. We might then see whether, and when, commerce developed in them. By contrast, we might also find cities founded, or expanded, on new commerce, like Chongqing (Chungking), which then attracted a seat of government for the better extraction of its new wealth, or Hankou (Hankow), which mushroomed into existence in the mid-Ming and appears to have kept government at arm's length throughout its prime (Rowe 1984).

Surely we would find both kinds of developments; and we would find still more cities in which, as in Ningbo, both happened nearly simultaneously. The goal of research on this subject should not be to determine primacy for commerce versus administration, economic versus political, for every scholar realizes — now, and partly in response to Skinner's work — that both matter very much. The goal should be to find a way to think clearly and usefully about the nature of the relationship between these two factors and among the many others that also play a part.

Essential to such a project — and here I quarrel with Skinner's imagery about cities as “the ‘command posts’ that serve to articulate and integrate human activity in space and time” (1977b:216) — is a clear focus on human agents. Reification is treacherous: cities do not act. People do thus-and-so, and, in response, other people submit, concur, remain passive, invent imagery of resistance, throw rocks at tanks. The Chinese people's two political-economic logics impede the conceptualization of a class structure congruent with the details of their history and ethnography. Some lumping of people into larger units is needed for the discourse that links individuals with various relations to means of production. But cities are not those units. Historical-materialist approaches, not functionalist ones modified by social-psychological “cycles,” seem more likely to produce workable categories of human relations. Not rivers or cities, but humans with similar and differing relations as producers, settled China.

Having set forth the outline of an alternative theory, I should sketch how that theory might better account for spatial aspects of Chinese settlement. Skinner's research unearths two important questions. He asks why urbanization fell off after its peak during the Song and assumed different forms, and he interrogates the differential distribution of capital and noncapital cities.

Although landscapes continued to fill in with central places after the Song, “the levels of urbanization achieved in the most advanced regions were higher in

the medieval era than in late imperial times” (Skinner 1977d:28). Skinner attributes this decline to the placing of later (post-Song) capitals further from the cores of their macroregions than were medieval ones, for defense against the now-powerful central Asians. While this idea is reasonable in tributary terms, it runs counter to Skinner's general argument.

In the TMP/PCMP approach, however, Song capitals may have remained in production cores in the interests of the unusually powerful petty-capitalist classes among Song elites. In class terms, Song officials represented petty-capitalist interests better, perhaps, than did officials of any succeeding Chinese state until the Republic. The late empires, with their major northern capitals, grew in power; and the system gained its final form and consolidated a ruling class on successful tribute extraction. By the Qing, many peasants were direct tenants of the imperial household or of bannermen — Manchu aristocrats (Naquin and Rawski 1987:146). Twenty-nine percent of the total arable land of the capital province belonged to early-Qing banners, and, according to Philip Huang, “some 20,000,000 of China's 740,000,000 mu of arable land was doled out by the court” (1985:87).

Tributary elites may have strengthened their mode by retreating, moving their capital to the North China Plain. With road-connected plains their supporting appanages, they competed from strength with petty capitalists. On that well-policed, flat region, where troops could travel quickly even if goods moved slowly, the state could squeeze the last drops from tiny producers rather than directly confront the complexities and strengths of the merchants to the south. The tiny accumulations of northern commoners sublimated invisibly in icy tributary air; capitalism's sprouts froze. We see a monstrous parallel of the household that, having got rich from salt or pawnshops, sinks some of its wealth into land for its security, but still keeps its profit-making shops in town.

The puzzle that later great cities became smaller, or at least no bigger than, those of the Song also yields to this logic. Though the TMP was weak during the Song, its supporters regained their power during Yuan, Ming, and early Qing. The tendency to build big commercial cities located for the convenience of capital should, therefore, have diminished as petty capitalists presented lower profiles. What might have become capitalism became “petty,” retreating to small scale and small towns.

How does the TMP/PCMP model contrast with Skinner's for an interpretation of the overall distribution of China's cities? The interested reader may wish to consult, as I did, the endpaper maps for *The City in Late Imperial China*. These locate all Chinese cities with populations of four thousand or more in late Qing (or fifty thousand or more in 1953) which were: county- or higher-level capitals; officially designated as cities between 1893 and 1953; or in other ways displayed clear evidence of urbanness (see Skinner 1977b:221 for details). The maps are an invaluable reference, especially useful for their graphic representation of county capitals. They do, however, overestimate the effects of European trade and un-

derestimate those of the indigenous trade from the southeast coast to Taiwan and southeast Asia.

Three peculiarities of the distribution of these county capitals draw attention. One is a tripartite division of the patterning of cities across China as a whole. The second is the unevenness of the distribution of central places in the North China Plain (and, less impressively, in the Sichuan Basin), including the near-absence of cities on the northern coast. The third is the curious layout of county capitals across Guizhou and Yunnan.

We may look first at the three patterns of city distribution which Skinner's map reveals. First, the North China Plain, dominated by Beijing, is dense with county capitals that are of no great commercial importance and has virtually no cities that are economically important but are not capitals. The Sichuan Basin repeats this pattern. Second, the Lower Yangzi carries the majority of truly large cities. There are so many that not all serve as capitals, even of their own counties. The Pearl River delta is a miniature Yangzi, as would the southeast coast (including Taiwan) have been during its heyday of overseas trade. The third pattern occupies a huge crescent, sweeping south of Hangzhou and the Yangzi cities, inland from the narrow citified coast of Fujian, and westward and northward through western Sichuan and to the north. In this large, mountainous, and relatively sparsely settled region, virtually all cities are capitals; there is not enough business to generate a surplus of urban places beyond the needs of officials for centers of authority.<sup>2</sup>

Along with urban placement, the distribution of TMP expenditures, of upper-level degree holders, of lineages, and of dominant relations of production can be used to estimate differential effects of TMP and PCMP vigor. The simplest possible graphic representation of such variation is a four-square model in which we play off a strong and a weak TMP against a strong and a weak PCMP (see Figure 4.1 and Map, facing p. 1).

The great crescent stretch of territory (LR, weak TMP/weak PCMP) in which commodity production was not developed by either intensive trade or marked state attention is the least "Chinese" part of the empire. This was true in many

2. Susan Naquin and Evelyn S. Rawski, using an only slightly modified version of Skinner's macroregions, have compiled extremely interesting summaries of the macroregional societies as they existed during the eighteenth century (1987). Their descriptions of each region are extensive, covering a wide range of topics drawn from more recent social history. Their work has been useful to me in many ways, but most especially as a check on my own formulation of the main outlines of regionality (which follows this note in the main text). It is not surprising that Naquin and Rawski, following Skinner's lead, find many differences among the macroregions; a dead uniformity would be far more surprising. With few exceptions, however, I am satisfied that my broader categorization, which combines some macroregions on the basis of eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century urban patterning, is not in conflict with theirs.

FIGURE 4.1. Differential effects of TMP and PCMP vigor on the three urban patterns

		TMP	
		strong	weak
PCMP	strong	TMP / PCMP strong strong	TMP / PCMP weak strong
	weak	TMP / PCMP strong weak	TMP / PCMP weak weak

UL: Lower and middle Yangzi, Pearl River delta (urban pattern two, above)

LL: North China Plain, broadly defined, Chengdu Basin (urban pattern one, above)

UR: Southeast coast, Taiwan (urban pattern two, above)

LR: Southeast to northwest interior crescent (only partially sinified, urban pattern three, above)

senses. Its towns lacked all but rudimentary state and petty-capitalist institutions; its people, not pressured by the double burden of such extractive institutions, did not populate the land thickly or garden it intensively; the many variations of kinship, local political organization, custom, and costume that we subsume as ethnicity were widely present, not yet crushed out of existence by the Han culture that precipitated from the interaction of the two modes. Naquin and Rawski contrast the countryside of Skinner's Lingnan (Guangdong and Guangxi) with its nearby Pearl River delta core: "The culture of the mountains, oblivious to macroregional boundaries, resembled that in other highland peripheries, especially the adjacent Middle Yangtze" (1987:180).

We know little about either the minorities<sup>3</sup> or the Han (visibly highly interdependent, if uncomfortably so) in such regions. It is clear, however, that they harbored considerable cultural variability. This is as one would expect from people whose choices were not sharply constricted by official control or the discipline of the market. Government expenditures there were limited to those for minimal social control. They were regions in which neither lineages nor upper-level de-

3. Such studies as exist generally ignore the well-established findings of anthropologists who have studied similar stretches of cultural variability within state societies (e.g. Leach 1965; Barth 1969). These make it plain that "minorities" (like peasants) can be understood only in the context of the wider cultural patterns that generate their continued reproduction.

gree holders were significantly represented and where the relations of production appear to have been relatively egalitarian, based on widespread access to means of production.

In the quarter of the diagram representing the North China Plain (and Sichuan Basin) (strong TMP/weak PCMP), we find another political-economic balance. State ownership and disbursements were great; private commodities were produced primarily for very local use and exchanged largely at periodic markets. Periodic markets were not a sign of well-capitalized commodity production, but rather the reverse. Mao Zedong, after a 1930 field study, concluded that "the business in periodic markets represents the natural economy and the business [done by] shops and carts represents the commercial economy" (Mao 1990:109).

In the North China Plain, the only cities were capitals, but these were thickly strewn. The state was strong, commerce was weak; in Naquin and Rawski's phrase, it was an area "of strong government supervision." These historians of the eighteenth century also note that North China "appears to have received more than its share of government funds — for price stabilization, waterway and road maintenance, and local defense, not to mention the regular salaries paid to bannermen [during the Qing — H.G.] and government employees." The government was especially willing to spend on the Yellow River water conservancy and on management of the Grand Canal (1987:144). The money spent by the state did not remain with its populace, however.

The North China Plain is a region from which it has long been relatively easy for the state to extract nearly all surplus, both of labor and of products. Naquin and Rawski note the importance of that plain (along with the lower Yangzi Valley) as late as the Qing in supplying tribute grain to Beijing to feed those "who depended on the throne for their livelihood." This remained one of the few Qing taxes to be paid largely in kind (22). Here, Skinner sees city rank/size distribution for north China as one of the two "clear-cut cases of primacy" (along with Guangzhou) (1977b:237–38), a pattern associated with intensive extraction in favor of whatever class dominated the primate city.

Small owner-operator agriculturalists and tenants with fairly secure tenancy from nearby small rural landlords dominated this region. By early Qing, Philip Huang says, officials limited large landholders and encouraged a smallholder economy because smallholders "were a more accessible source of tax revenue than the powerful big estate owners. From the point of view of the central government, they were also far less politically threatening" (1985:86).

For commoners, the North China Plain was a poor place and thus produced few of the social organizations characteristic of strong petty-capitalist production, notably the lineage. Northerners organized only small and weak lineages, emphasizing welfare and pooled educational advantages rather than corporate activity in the market. Shandong's Kong (Confucius) lineage, "virtually enfeoffed

in Qufu county, was a rare exception, thriving on its unusual connections with official life," according to Naquin and Rawski (1987:146–47).

With little hope of wealth from private commodity production, and with many sources for disbursement of TMP benefits, north China commoners took education as the wisest — almost the only — strategy for class climbing. In the eighteenth century, when competition from richer regions was intense, only the lower Yangzi produced more scholars than did north China (Naquin and Rawski 1987:143).

If the undeveloped low TMP/low PCMP crescent was the least Chinese part of China, the North China Plain, where tributary circuits thoroughly dominated those of petty capitalism, conforms most closely to cultural orthodoxy. Private marketing was common and adequate to meet the needs of poor and frugal customers, but commodity production created neither wealth nor many goods that traveled far. Officials were effectively positioned to enforce demands for taxes, military service, *corvée*, and other forms of tribute. One recalls the resort to women's labor in building the "new" Grand Canal by a dynasty that had "used up" too many men.

The Sichuan Basin resembles the North China plain in many particulars. Chengdu, before the late-nineteenth-century expansion of Chongqing, was a city of very high primacy — far larger than the next-ranked city — and hence high extractive ability. For strategic reasons, officials had to control the Sichuan Basin, though local people time and again showed a preference for autonomy. Once its people had constructed the necessary water- and roadworks, the basin became a rice bowl for pre-Song capitals on the upper Yellow River, a unique inland source of salt for the interior provinces and an early exporter of state-produced silks. According to Naquin and Rawski, although the region was on the edge of empire, it was "better integrated into the national economy than any other peripheral region" (1987:194).

Its main products moved in tributary circuits, not in the market. They moved under the control of Chengdu's officials, linked to the capital by enormously labor-intensive roads, and by boats that men dragged up the Yangzi. By the mid-nineteenth century, all cities of any consequence in the basin were capitals, with sitting officials immediately present to ensure the dominance of tributary over petty-capitalist transfers.

Sichuan's distance from the capital may have allowed its petty capitalists more leeway than those of the North China plain. After its devastation and repopulation of the last four centuries, the area was notable neither for complex lineages (as my hypothesis predicts) nor for production of upper-level degree holders (a situation that runs counter to my argument) (Naquin and Rawski 1987:198).

Officials governing populations among whom petty capitalism had gained a strong foothold faced two very different sets of problems, so that there were significant differences between the two areas in which petty capitalism was

strongest: the Yangzi Valley and the Pearl River delta (centering on Guangzhou) regions (strong TMP/strong PCMP) and the southeast coast (primarily of Fujian) and Taiwan (weak TMP/strong PCMP). The pattern of city distribution in all areas was similar during the centuries leading up to the intrusion of European steamships, with their associated expansion of Yangzi Valley cities. All these regions were heavily urbanized, and their cities and towns noted more for production and commerce than for their roles as capitals. Wenzhou (Zhejiang), Fuzhou, Quanzhou, Zhangzhou, Xiamen (Fujian), and Chaozhou (Guangdong) on the southeast coast, and Lugang, Beigang, and Anping in Taiwan were all important and vigorous ports in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Although people in all these areas were strongly responsive to the logic of the PCMP, they can be distinguished, as in the four-square diagram, into two sets on the basis of other organizational and cultural tendencies. Tributary influence was strong over the lower Yangzi and the Pearl River delta, weak over the Fujian coast and Taiwan. The reasons are apparent: river/canal transport, essential to extraction of resources in the Yangzi Valley and Pearl Delta, was far different from coastal transport in two ways. First, inland water transport was much more dependent on human intervention for the creation of appropriate infrastructure, so that the users of that transport were more directly controllable by the state. Second, not only was the hinterland of the Fujian cities their own provincial interior (which was, indeed, relatively undeveloped), but so also was their overseas commercial empire, over which the Chinese imperium did not extend.

Chinese river traffic was always heavily biased toward imperial capitals. But over seven thousand Fujianese ships carried silk, porcelain, and tea to Manila every year in the late sixteenth century to await New World galleons (Naquin and Rawski 1987:168). To a far greater extent than in the Yangzi Valley or the Pearl Delta, Fujianese petty capitalists could ignore the demands of the state and do business on petty-capitalist principles — practices officials habitually described as smuggling, piracy, or worse. The extraction of tribute from that coast was so difficult that under Qing rulers, who ran a rather short fuse, the coast was simply cleared of population for ten miles or so inland in the 1660s. Although this move was disruptive, the disruption did not last. In the most expansive years for this region, Fujianese traded virtually everywhere in coastal Asia, setting up permanent colonies in many parts of "the southern ocean." At home, they built cities dense with the lineage halls that were corporate headquarters to such merchant empires as "the Amoy network" (Ng 1983). Imperial concern for the defense and the customs revenues of Fujian appear not to have resulted in consistent, long-term expenditures there, as they did on river conservancies.

By contrast, Yangzi Valley people and those of Guangdong, until foreign trade with Europe was licensed to local merchants, relied far more on the land than on

the sea for wealth. Even the Guangdongese, now well known as sojourners, formed no overseas colonies until the middle of the nineteenth century. The coastal trading of Yangzi Valley people was sharply limited by the official action and construction described below.

The number of upper-level degrees acquired in particular times and places was influenced not only by wealth but by whether merchant ties to scholar-officials were necessary to the successful conduct of business. In the Yangzi Valley and Pearl Delta, the state-franchised merchants, along with landlords and other major commodity producers, had real need of such links to the ruling class. These areas have long and consistently produced large numbers of upper-level degree holders. With commercial prosperity abroad, the Fujianese needed them less. During the Ming, prior to their overseas-generated independence, the Fujianese had ranked first in per-capita production of *jin shi* (upper scholars); at the height of their prosperity in the eighteenth century it stood at eighth place (Naquin and Rawski 1987:173).

As will be seen in Chapter 8, differences in the capacity of the TMP to influence petty capitalists also encouraged subtle but important distinctions between the lineages of the Yangzi/Pearl on the one hand and the southeast coast on the other.

The Yangzi Valley and Guangdong regions were far more dependent on the logic of the tributary mode, and were also — perhaps in consequence? — more productive. The Yangzi Valley — what Skinner would divide into lower and middle Yangzi — is the clearest example of the importance of natural river transport in shaping Chinese destinies. Even here, a significant anomaly exists: the impoverished and unurbanized coastal plain north of the river. I shall return to the Jiangbei below.

It took centuries to drain, canalize, and otherwise improve much of the Yangzi basin, including the economically key portions to the east and south (Shiba 1977:391–401). But from the Han on, keeping it in the empire and exploiting its variety and riches became a permanent goal of ruling classes. Earlier discussion of official canal construction to link the river to other significant regions gives an indication of the willingness of officials to turn the tributary system to the accomplishment of such goals.

The Pearl Delta emerged into significance as early as the Han, first as a strategic locale against powerful southeast Asian states (the "Miracle Canal" was built to assist troop transfers there). It also became a producer of tribute grain and textile fibers and an important participant in the kind of overseas Asian trade that the Fujianese enjoyed. It became a truly great commercial center, however, only when it was permitted by the state to act as entrepôt for burgeoning European trade in the eighteenth century. Although wealth flowed into the cities of the delta from their exchanges with the mountainous outback regions of Guangdong and Guangxi, large parts of those regions were not any-

body's hinterland but simply autonomous tribal territory host to an occasional Chinese peddler.<sup>4</sup>

Increasingly from the Song forward, both TMP and PCMP logics were powerful in these areas. The Yangzi especially was the central arena of China's historic struggle between a hegemonic TMP and a structurally more dynamic PCMP. The Yangzi Valley became rich not only because of natural endowments, or even because, as Skinner says, it enjoyed "imperial favor" (1977d:13). After the withdrawal of the capital city to the far north, it gained strength from its distance from the political center. Neither protected by remoteness nor right in the emperor's doorway, the Yangzi area achieved a critical balance: between official power to channel social wealth into social construction and petty-capitalist power to accumulate expansionary kin-group capital.

At the same time, the Yangzi Valley became an appallingly poor region, peopled not only by rich merchants and prosperous independent farmers but by hard-pressed tenants and rootless agricultural laborers, exhausted textile workers, slaves and bondservants by the millions, hideously exploited trackers and porters who moved the region's commodities to yamen and to market. Inequalities appear to have been greater here than anywhere else in China (Naquin and Rawski 1987:63-64), except, perhaps, in Guangzhou. In the elaborate hierarchy of urban central places summarized by Skinner's rank/size distribution graphs for the middle and lower Yangzi and Guangzhou (1977b:238-39), participation in the market was not an option. It was a given, and there were, inevitably, far more losers than winners.

Here more than anywhere, people had to make hard decisions about their use of resources. Those who had surpluses — landlords living from rents, producers of commodity crops, capitalizers of putting-out systems, moneylenders, merchants with no ties to production — could use their means of production in hopes of gaining profits. But they must then protect them against the depredations of a state ever eager to rebuild the city wall or the local Confucius temple or to pay the cost of a war, a tomb, or a serious mistake in ecological calculation. Or, petty-capitalist surplus could be spent on the great educational lottery, grooming an agnate for the bureaucracy and hence access to the economic benefits, protection, and prestige of ruling-class status. Sometimes a bribe would do just as well. In the meantime, however, another merchant or landlord or money-

4. A man who peddled in central Guangxi in the 1930s, backpacking six months' inventory of needles, silk thread, and fancy cloth, revealed the casualness of the commercial dealings of many of these hill folk compared with his experiences with fellow Han: "Within the mountains was an inner plain, a hilly area. Rivers ran through, so with transportation better, people were able to buy goods from other sources. They were richer, too, planting corn, sweet potatoes, and taro, but no rice. We'd visit them too, and they fed and housed us free because they said we only came once a year, and they didn't need our money" (Gates 1987b:134).

lender would have expanded his capital, putting him ever closer to the possibility of outcompeting his class equals.

To an outsider such as myself for whom the TMP view of the world seems little more than a ruling-class tool, it is these central regions, not the northern plains, that seem most clearly to express the uniqueness of Chinese culture. Tyrannical feudalisms that see peasants as trees to shake for fruit, that make gods of their emperors and near-deities of tax collectors and lictors were common enough, at one time, on the earth. A sophisticated bureaucracy in which poets were also expected to be engineers, and essayists jurists, which was locked in an endless, cruel, yet fertile embrace with the world's best businesspeople, however, is a cultural creation second to none. Peasants — in those regions where commodity production was minimal — and farmers — where people produced much for market, buying the products of others for daily needs — are contenders in this struggle. That contest is seen most clearly in cities, especially those of the Yangzi Valley.

That has been true for a millennium, since urban life began to flourish with the emergence of the PCMP. It is also true today, when Shanghai, Wuhan, and the rest (certainly including Guangzhou), heirs of an implicitly counterhegemonic petty-capitalist tradition, have captured most of China's industry and, during the 1980s reforms, a great deal of its private commerce. The balance between centralism and privatism, between planned infrastructure and an effervescent market, seems better, for economic expansion, in these regions than elsewhere. This balance hints at what to aim for, as China finds its future.

A second peculiarity of the urban landscape to which Skinner's map draws our attention was the near-absence of cities on the nineteenth-century northern coast. Except for Tianjin and Qingdao, much expanded by steam and capitalism, there were few ports; river deltas appeared unpopulated; marshy lowlands lay undrained. Curiously, the Gulf of Bohai, not as large or warm as the Mediterranean but far more hospitable to human use than the Baltic and dangerous North Atlantic near Britain, was nobody's central sea.

Particularly interesting were the regions known as the Jiangbei, the land north of the Yangzi, and the Huaibei, north of the Huai. With both ocean- and river-transport potential, with flat land and temperate climate, we might expect to see an urban distribution similar to that of the Yangzi Valley or the southeast coast. Instead, for hundreds of miles up the Jiangsu and Shandong coasts, and in much of the interior of Anhui, Skinner's map shows little but minor capitals, and few enough of those. Although other well-watered, flat regions have been built over the centuries into productive and densely populated centers of Chinese life, the Huaibei was the home of rebels and bandits (Perry 1980), and the Jiangbei of destitute women who traveled to the Yangzi as prostitutes and, eventually, Shanghai textile workers (Honig 1986).

Indigenous traders certainly sailed this coast, but they skipped from the lower Yangzi or Fujian to Shandong, then on to Korea and Japan. They did not stop

along the way because the Jiangbei was poor, its people constantly in rebellion, and its potentially good land salted and ruined. The region's ecologically based unproductiveness was the direct consequence of the interruption of natural eastward drainage by the Grand Canal, and of the resulting soil salination of a band seventy-five to one hundred miles wide along the coast (Van Slyke 1988:77). Building the Grand Canal modified this landscape on such a scale as to reveal its patterns on today's satellite photos and in a distribution of cities which is comparable with China's most remote and unpopulated regions. Lesser official manipulation of waterways in uncountable places and times had similar, if more local, effects. R. Keith Schoppa describes a locally "momentous" water control project near Hangzhou, successfully completed in 1465. The ensuing ecological disasters created a tiny Jiangbei of recurrent drought and trouble (1989:43-44).

A final example of what urban patterns reveal about the armature of TMP structure which underlies the development of commerce and administration in China can be seen on Skinner's map in the region he calls Yun-Kwei. Skinner himself recognizes this region as residual: "As of the 1840's, in fact, Yun-Kwei might best be seen as a congeries of five small, fairly autonomous central-place systems whose centers were widely dispersed in terms of travel time and only very tenuously interrelated" (1977b:241). But this statement ignores what is interesting about the far southwest.

Across almost a thousand miles of the most rugged mountains imaginable stretches an almost neat line of county capitals, stations of a post road running from the headwaters of Yangzi tributaries southward to the Burma border. Perhaps the goods that traveled in backpacks and mule trains over these narrow trails attracted a revenue-seeking administration. But control more than resources must have motivated generations of officials to maintain this link to an important frontier.

Attempts to account for the spatial distribution of the Chinese lead necessarily to inquiries into regularities in the timing of events. Skinner has capped his spatial model building with an encompassing vision of cycles of regional development. An understanding of these, he argues, must precede a proper apprehension of the wider trajectory of China as a whole (1985: 288-90).

Between Skinner's early statement of his interest in cycles (1971) and his more complete development of the idea (1985), Robert M. Hartwell launched his synthesis in "Demographic, Political, and Social Transformations of China, 750-1550" (1982). This much-cited essay was intended as a test of some of the hypotheses of a regional-systems approach to Chinese history. It thus represents one of the few extended empirical explorations of Skinner's widely disseminated views. Yet it supports Skinner's conclusions only very weakly, standing closer to traditional history and further from Skinner's nomothetically inclined social science. Lacking neat conclusions, Hartwell's work also seems to grow more authentically from Chinese experience.

To get on with his task, Hartwell expands the ground included in the concept of regional cycles to include three causes:

(1) unique historical events that either inaugurated or terminated periods of development in specific regions, (2) the varying costs of interregional transfers of technology, productive factors, and surpluses, and (3) the different institutional responses that shaped the course of intraregional development as well as interregional exchanges. In other words, an understanding of the historical process requires a systematic analysis of the internal dynamics of ecologically diverse physiocratic regions which were at different stages of development and a careful inquiry into the cumulative impact of the interrelationships between these major areas on the nature of Chinese society at various points in time. (1982:367)

In his section on intraregional development, Hartwell begins with a modified version of Skinner's macroregions, subdividing the seven that lay at least in part within Song territory into cores and peripheries and sometimes as well into subregions, for a total of nineteen physiographic units (368). This starting point removes us at once from the insistent logic of river-basin transport networks so fundamental to Skinner's macroregions. It also raises a slight uneasiness for this reader at least that, if one divides the data often and ingeniously enough, major tendencies will be lost in a host of minor correlations. Skinner's model, for all its flaws, is at least consistent — he writes of the rivers, and lets the exceptions sink or swim.

But more important, Hartwell radically modifies the theoretical nature of the inquiry. In a section on interregional settlement (comparative population densities), he chooses a strong example, the eastern subregion of north China from the turn of the present era to the mid-sixteenth century. Central to his argument is the location of the national capital over these centuries, which "almost always generated a period of intraregional development, and its removal, an era of systemic decline. . . . Development was the result of interregional integration brought about by a fiscal system which artificially reduced freight costs by subsidizing the transport of tax revenues and state purchases, frequently in the form of grain, from distant areas" (1982:386). Hartwell has shifted — quite correctly, in my view — from Skinner's retail-marketing-driven model to one in which official action *not* based on profit-seeking triggers other kinds of growth, and in which interregional influences from the center are key to "regional cycles."

Hartwell's conclusions constitute a valuable summary of a key era by a knowledgeable sinologue (425-26). But they are not tests of a hypothesis, for none is presented, and the potentially focusing lens developed by Skinner is jettisoned early on. No longer anchored in natural rivers and to profitable marketing along them, the macroregion concept is set adrift. A macroregion can be anything one likes to draw a boundary around, and a regional cycle can be touched off by anything from plague to imperial whimsy.

Scholarly emphasis on commerce as an ultimately determining factor in Chinese life has a free-standing quality both as regards secular change and as regards other aspects of the social formation. What are the concomitants of the for-profit exchange at the core of this argument? Is this capitalism? If not, what is it? Do we ignore the state's economic role, but if not, how do we conceptualize it? How does a marketing-centered vision of China relate to the much-asked questions of whether China developed an indigenous capitalism, or industrial revolution, or modernity? These are overly Eurocentric questions, but they have been the big questions of the China field at least since Weber, and are more than tangential to Skinner's project. One can pass lightly over such questions in work on Europe, the Americas, Africa, southeast Asia, where the effects of a well-theorized, well-understood capitalist mode of production are givens in academic discourse. A Braudelian insouciance toward the nature of "the market" disappoints for China. Capitalism did not and has not become hegemonic there. Its past, present, and future are marked by the workings of a commodity production that, for a millennium or longer, did not turn into capitalism. What, in China, do markets mean?

In 1985, Skinner reasserted his long-held assumptions about the prime movers of the Chinese political economy: "A key fact is that each macroregional economy took shape in and was wholly contained within a physiographic macroregion that can be defined in terms of drainage basins" (280). He draws attention (1985:280n20) to his papers in *The City in Late Imperial China* in which these ideas are developed. He argues that Chinese history has "a hierarchical structure that parallels and expresses the on-the-ground hierarchy of local and regional systems. At every level from the standard marketing community to the macroregional economy, these nodal systems have characteristic rhythms and distinctive histories." He goes on to claim that marketing systems are "at once social communities, parapolitical systems, and culture-bearing units. The constraints on human interaction that economic geographers quantify as cost-distance are, when transport is unmechanized, pervasive in human affairs: they channel administrative and social interaction no less than economic transactions." And in a rare comparison with the nonsinic world, he at last clarifies the nature of the economic system he has anatomized, bracketing preindustrial Europe with China as examples of "agrarian economies dominated by commercial capitalism" (287, 288, 286).

It is in "regional cycles" that Skinner finds "the structure of Chinese history." What does he mean by cycles? His 1985 essay refers to the work of "long-waves" theorists, discussing briefly the possible consequences of such indisputably exogenous, nonhumanly caused events as variations in solar radiation and the always contentious issue of minor climatic fluctuations (284-86).<sup>5</sup> Neither

5. The latter, of course, are far more responsive to human action than vulgar materialists like to think them. Over centuries, Chinese agriculturalists have made heroic efforts to create favorable microclimates for crops by tree planting, the building of reservoirs, and other well-known means. Per-

Skinner's nor Hartwell's cycle is based on such exogenous triggering events as climate change, however. Instead, Skinner refers repeatedly to political decisions such as the moving of a capital or the attempt to limit coastwise trade — moves in the tributary mode (271-72, 276).

Ultimately, his cycles, like his macroregions and his analysis, are agentless: "We let the data themselves — the rise and fall of economic activities — speak" (288). The treating of things as agents, of people as things, and of theories as ideologically innocent offspring of "the data" are precisely the errors that Marxists most strongly deplore in bourgeois scholarship.

Although Skinner's theoretical premises are ill founded, his work is important because it has focused attention on commodity production as integral to Chinese culture and on the necessity to view China not only as a single entity, or yet as a million villages to study, ten thousand counties to analyze, a thousand lineages to interpret. His work relates the great and the small, it is historical, and it is materialist. It thus provides China studies with a desirably old-fashioned anchor in a discipline in which many believe that not only their own worlds but everybody else's are constructed of a frothy mix of words and volition.

It is easy to criticize, harder to build a better mousetrap. What are the advantages of seeing the spatial distribution of China's population more as the outcome of the interplay of two modes of production rather than of commerce and administration? There are several: in theory, in the fit of that theory with empirical findings, and in prediction. Such predictions as I dare offer is found in Chapters 10 and 11; an empirical test is found in Chapter 7.

haps unintentionally, and often much more swiftly, they have ruined many environments (see Schoppa 1989; Perdue 1987).

## Patricorporations: The State and the Household

"Look!" and she pointed a trembling finger at the widow, "there's my son, the best fisherman in Anping. He has been taken away from me: he used to earn money and bring me anything I wanted. He has left behind him his useless widow and those two girls there: what can they do but eat rice?" — A Taiwanese woman, late 1860s

I wouldn't let myself be angry with the children. It was not their fault. If I had been angry with them, I would have sold them long ago. It was my responsibility to bring them up into adults. My own mother and my adopted mother had died, leaving me to grow up by myself. I would not leave my daughters. — Lo A Lan, a Taiwanese woman, 1980

The Chinese family system, icon of Chinese life and Chinese studies, is often cited as an elementary structure, an irreducible given, a cause of behavior (e.g. Chao Kang 1987:9, 29–30, 226). That this particularly well-studied pattern of belief and practice might be itself the consequence of yet more elementary causes has not been much considered. Under the influence of a Marxist-feminist perspective, some anthropologists have begun to see kinship as a set of practices that are not fundamental, irreducible, but rather a mediating mechanism through which the gendered division of labor in society is made to seem biological, natural, and right (e.g. Fernandez-Kelly 1981; Friedman 1986). Anthropologists have repeatedly demonstrated the plasticity of kinship in response to political-economic change (e.g. Leacock 1971; Gailey 1980, 1987; J. Goody 1983). Such an approach to Chinese kinship increases our understanding of several as-yet-unsolved puzzles.

The first of these puzzles is whether Chinese kinship is singular or multiple? Is there something we may call *a* Chinese kinship system, or should we be looking at one system in Taiwan in the early 1930s, another in the environs of

Hangzhou in late Southern Song, a mid-Ming northwestern version, and so forth: one for every political-economic context that has displayed significant difference over the long stretch of history? Kinship variations over time and place abounded, evidenced by magistrates' decisions, local histories, and persisting contemporary custom. Strong commonalities over time and space also existed, however. These commonalities have convinced the Chinese themselves and most Western scholars that it is worthwhile to talk of *a* Chinese kinship system. I try here to account for that convincing but difficult-to-prove sense of unity, while finding more than idiosyncratic, eclectic explanations for the all-too-apparent variation.

Two other questions point to a solution. What is a *jia*, the "family" or household? Why do the Chinese organize themselves into lineages? That these are very considerable puzzles is more apparent, perhaps, to anthropologists with a comparative perspective than to sinologists. Uncertainty about how to define the *jia* (which may contain both kin and nonkin, and coresident and noncoresident members) continues to bedevil analysts (e.g. Hsieh Jih-chang 1981; Wang Sung-hsing 1985). Lineages, which are nearly universal in kin-corporate (loosely, "tribal") societies, are generally absent in class societies ("states"), except among aristocrats. Commoner lineages such as those of ordinary villagers in many parts of China are unknown in other class societies: emerging states typically undermined such potential rivals for political power (Fried 1967). Astonishingly, lineages are being reinvented in China in the 1980s and 1990s. Burton Pasternak has called the phenomenon "the disquieting Chinese lineage" (1985a).

Whatever China's pre-Song kinship system may have been, it has been reshaped by at least three powerful factors from that time on. One of these was the substrate of behaviors diffusing from non-Han to Han people in regions of recent Han settlement. Another was the law as enforced by officials and their unsalaried local subalterns, kin seniors charged with maintaining kin orthodoxy. The third was political-economic consistency in property relations combined with flexibility in labor use, functions of differing tributary and petty-capitalist choices.

### NON-HAN INFLUENCES

In some regions, non-Han kinship influences on recent Han immigrants were clearly important, as in southern Taiwan (Pan Yinghai 1988; Shepherd 1993), where high rates of uxorial marriages perhaps were indications of an Aboriginal tradition of female power (A. Wolf 1989a). With different sexual divisions of labor, systems of land tenure, and distributions of social power, indigenous people may have influenced the expectations about women and the marriage practices of immigrant Han, especially when these came as small numbers of men needing land, the protection of numbers, and wives.

When either or both the tributary and the petty-capitalist modes became active in a region, however, as they did in northern Taiwan in the tea boom of the 1860s, different patterns of Han settlement quickly erased Aboriginal influence (along with many of the Aborigines themselves). Although we should not ignore China's complex cultural heritage in assessing the causes of kinship variation, I suggest that underlying non-Han substrates are likely to have engendered kinship variation only briefly, or in regions that long remained backwaters to official and merchant concern.

#### LEGAL CONTROL AND POPULAR PERCEPTIONS

A stronger influence on kinship was found in official ideology as it was given social expression through courts. According to Tang Mei-chun, "In China the judiciary has interfered with the family system ever since the early imperial era" (1985:61). Although the centerpiece of Western or, at least, of anglophone law of the past several centuries has been the protection of property rights of persons, real or fictitious, the focus of Chinese law since the Song has been the specification and preservation of political hierarchies, especially those of kinship. The Qing law code is dense with detailed references to the adjudication of cases involving agnatic kin and wives (affinal relatives are rarely mentioned).

When the relationship between contesting parties was one of kinship, that fact was absolutely central to a resolution. Derk Bodde and Clarence Morris point out that in homicide cases, for example, "the necessity to uphold parental authority seemingly [overrode] all other considerations." Criminal punishment for theft was elaborately calibrated to the kinship status of the parties. Children were liable to extreme punishments for behavior that resulted from double binds: the Qing code set a penalty of life exile at a distance of 3,000 *li* for sons whose parents, "having instructed a son to commit an act of moral turpitude or theft, then become fearful that this may be discovered and so commit suicide." At the same time, filial disobedience was also a grave crime. Under such logic, women suffered particular disabilities. Although a son was legally obliged to obey both his senior relatives and the law, a married woman could incur legal punishment if her behavior brought trouble on her natal family as well as on her in-laws. Qing law formalized this added burden on women (Bodde and Morris 1967: 196, 301, 411-12, 360-62). Married and unmarried daughters' legal responsibilities to their parents were symbolized — and taught — in popular tradition by the precise delineation of their respective roles at parents' funerals, at which they (and all important kin) wore distinguishing mourning costumes (A. Wolf 1970).

Kinship rituals, including those of marriage, were another important area of legal concern. A marriage entered into without a contract, a go-between, and the appropriate nuptial ceremonies was not a marriage under the Qing code, but

prostitution or a clandestine marriage, which was punished as fornication, and the couple were separated (Hoang 1898:13). In a case of this sort observed by a foreign resident in Guangzhou in the mid-nineteenth century, parents had an eloping couple imprisoned for some time for disobedience and breach of promise (because the woman was engaged to another man). We do not learn their judicial fate (Gray 1878, 1:191).

While the actions of high-ranking households were particularly carefully supervised as to the forms of their marriages, funerals, and other rituals, heterodox kinship practices growing up among commoners were subject to censure, official exhortation, and punishment as well. A late-Ming literatus, Qing Yong, wrote a series of moralizing work songs to stem the increased frequency of uxoriolocal marriages, which he saw as a perversion of nature. One reads:

It's unreal, like a puppet show.  
Flesh and blood are reversed.  
Oh, sorrowful are the parents  
To see their son depart.  
Money is as heavy as the mountains  
While bone and flesh are light as feathers.  
Adoption of the son-in-law  
Is turning the whole world mad.  
What is needed is a return  
To the good customs of yore. (quoted in Ching 1988:191-92)

Another form of marriage in which brides remained in their parents' homes, sometimes for years, became notorious in parts of the Pearl River Delta in the late 1800s. John Gray remarks that "with a view of suppressing it, the magistrates of the district . . . not unfrequently issue proclamations calling upon parents to compel their daughters to reside at once with their husbands" (Gray 1878, 1:208); fathers who permitted such marriages to continue sometimes were punished and humiliated by Confucianizing officials (Stockard 1989:105-16).

Parents used both the threat and the reality of the law to control rebellious children. Shiga Shuzo says that under Qing law, when parents or grandparents requested a magistrate to punish their juniors' defiance, "the authorities, without investigation and acting solely on the parents' complaint," could pronounce a sentence of banishment, revokable if the parents withdrew the complaint (1978:141). Gray remarks that "sometimes parents cast their disobedient children into a public prison. Prisoners of this class are commonly bound by chains to large stones, and exposed daily, together with other offenders, at the principal gates of the prison." In two cases known personally to him, the son of a "respectable tradesman" and disobedient young men were imprisoned for several months (1878, 1:236-37). In 1860s Taiwan, W. A. Pickering saw a mother take her

son to the magistrate to support parental authority (1898:61-63). R. F. Johnston, a sitting magistrate in Shandong, heard many cases of family disputes, sometimes with "representatives of four generations in the court at the same time." He notes the difficulty of a man's obtaining a divorce from a woman whose agnates could and would support her. They would "probably drag him before the magistrate on a charge of brutal treatment . . . to extract from the husband substantial pecuniary compensation" (1910:107, 209). That Johnston was an Englishman who conducted his courtroom very differently from traditionally punitive Chinese magistrates is beside the point: local people brought cases, we must assume, which they believed would be properly settled by law, when less formal methods had failed.

Other references to the enforcement of official kin norms through the courts are abundant in "outsider" observations and in Chinese legal documents (see Macgowan 1909:115-16 [family land case]; Huc 1970, 2:271 [failure to honor a marriage agreement]; Boxer 1953:150, [man punished by court for not prosecuting his wife for adultery]; Coltman 1891:168 [execution procession for an adulterous couple]; Gray 1878, 1:225 [husband both punished and rewarded for presenting a magistrate with his wife's and her lover's heads]. Johnston (1910) heard many such cases: brothers, or men and their sisters-in-law, dispute over the use of graveyard trees (121, 160); man asks agnates to pay their share of an ancient debt (139); man claims mortgaged land from agnate (140); man complains against his lineage elders (159); sons are accused of nonsupport (199); one branch of lineage brings action over land rotation against another branch (258). In addition to cases he cited to illustrate particular points, Johnston notes that agnatic mortgage litigation was frequent (147); that either idiosyncratically (159) or through lineage-written rulings, kinfolk were threatened with being turned over to magistrates for punishment (160-62); that fathers-in-law were particularly likely to bring trumped-up charges of unfiliality against young childless widows in their households, to oblige them to remarry (218); and that some women often went "hobbling off to the magistrate with some . . . accusation against a relation or a neighbor" (202).

An example from Guomindang Taiwan suggests how seriously people still take the legal status of their kinship relationship, which even there have significant social and economic consequences. Arthur Wolf notes that "one of the most vociferous quarrels I witnessed during my first field trip [to Taiwan in 1957-59 — H.G.] occurred when a family discovered that their uxorilocally married son-in-law had bribed the police to register all of his sons as his descendants" (1995: chap. 3, 6-7).

The great mass of Chinese, of course, did not undertake filial responsibilities, marry, or transfer property according to and because of government regulation. Indeed, as I argue below, they often followed quite other imperatives in their kinship lives. But officials strongly and consistently supported the elements of

Chinese kinship which upheld tributary production and distribution of society's resources.

Officials combined bureaucratic consistency with outbursts of state terrorism, sometimes merely in gruesome words and pictures, sometimes in horrific reality. An eager-beaver provincial judge displayed a poster of "the five punishments" he had made to "overawe the commoners"; the Qian Long emperor thought it indelicate and was not amused (Kuhn 1990:204). The casual cruelty that accompanied formal punishments was remarkable. A nineteenth-century traveler saw prisoners nailed through the hands to a cart because their captors happened not to have chains (Huc 1970 [1855], 2:269), and prison deaths from appalling conditions had to be controlled by a system of bureaucratic demerits (Gray 1875:52). Persons accused of treason or *lèse majesté* were hunted down and subjected to horrifying treatment (P. Kuhn 1990). In our own times, fear of the violent and almost supernatural randomness of official ire continues as the most powerful tool of Chinese politics.

Were official punishments sufficiently visible to influence popular behavior? Evidence that they were comes especially from foreign visitors, more likely than the Chinese to comment on their frequency and social context. Such foreigners should not be thought of as especially tender-minded, and hence particularly sensitive to brutality, familiar as they were with such Western horrors as prisons and workhouses, naval justice by flogging and keelhauling, slavery, and the unspeakable conduct of convict settlements (Hughes 1987).

Magistrates' yamens — headquarters for county government — contained prisons. Sometimes prisoners were confined in the outermost courtyard of the yamen itself, where all who had business in the more honorable inner courts would see them. M. Huc, traveling in Sichuan in the mid-nineteenth century, saw "a crowd of unfortunate criminals, with livid faces and wasted limbs, scarcely covered by a few rags. They were crouching in the sunshine; some had on their shoulders an enormous *cangue*, a sort of moveable pillory; others were loaded with chains and some had only fetters on their hands and feet" (1970, 1:41).

If prisons were ubiquitous, punishments were even more so. Victims were often cangued at the city gates, large temples, or in other public places, where their sufferings and humiliations would be widely observed, as Gray remembers: "I noticed in my travels through the central provinces that *cangues* [and *cangued* criminals] were placed at the gates of cities, and at the doors of yamuns or public offices as a warning to evil-doers." Passing through Jiangsu in 1866, he saw over a dozen farmers in towns along the way, cangued in the market for nonpayment of taxes. Cangued prisoners were often compelled to beg their food from door to door to avoid expense to the state, and flogging through the streets accompanied by synchronous blows on a gong was a common punishment for petty theft (1875:54-57). Public executions attracted great crowds, and Huc notes that popu-

lar pamphlets about the lives and trials of insubordinate bandits were "widely and cheaply available, and eagerly read" (1970, 2:252). Traveling in Shandong in the mid 1880s, Robert Coltman was told by wheelbarrow men that in a recent famine year "every road leading from Chinanfu had [criminals' heads exposed in baskets] along them, and some right close to the city-wall, too." " 'Pu ts'woa' ['Ain't it the truth!'] chimed in the second man" (1891:63-64). Gray observes that such cruel punishment as public exposure in cages designed to contort the body were more frequent in "district and prefectural cities than in provincial capitals"; he saw several examples in what was then the small commercial town of Manka (present-day Wanhua, Taipei) (1878, 1:56, 58).

Did the message that the law must be obeyed reach the villages? Hsiao Kung-chuan sums up the case for administrative penetration of commoners' lives by describing such local autonomy as existed as being "a result of incomplete centralization; the government never hesitated to interfere with village life whenever it deemed it necessary or desirable" (1960:263). Studies of village life and the popular culture of commoners suggest the power of state control there. Usually unable to impose direct rule on rural commoners, the state relied more on parental authority and religious intimidation than on magistrates. Tributary hierarchy stood firmly on a base of indirect, involuntary, unpaid lineage and household heads: village elders. Legally deputed to solve their agnates' problems or bring them to courts, male kin seniors were the NCOs in the state's chain of command.

When kin or village elders punished kinship faults, as they often did, it was in large part to avoid the dangers of the courts. That punishment in itself conveyed the message that the law might reach the offenders. Gray relates that after the Guangzhou rebellion of 1854-55 village elders in the districts of Namhoi and Shunde enabled many of the rebels to suicide: "These unfortunate offenders preferred capital punishment at the hands of the elders of their respective villages, and in the presence of their families, to falling into the hands of the mandarins by whom they would have been first tortured, and then decapitated" (1878, 1:72-73). The idea that kinship elders operated independently of the state, in a political and legal vacuum, ignores all we know about the inconsistent but lethal and terroristic legal practices of the late empire. Such men, down to individual household heads, were, willy-nilly, agents of the state whom officials might hold responsible for any bad conduct among those they supervised.

The best evidence for the penetration of the fear of law into every heart, however, may be found in the parallels drawn in folk religion between mundane and otherworldly punishments meted out to the dead. Over the centuries, specifically Buddhist evils were increasingly supplanted by Confucian and political misdeeds in the moral universe implied by supernatural punishments (Eberhard 1967:60-75, esp. 67). Gray has a fascinating list of malefactions (which include not paying taxes and house rents) and their appropriate retribution in the courts of

the underworld (1878, 1:150-56; also Eberhard 1967:24-59). In Taiwan in 1986 a mortuary establishment displayed a handsome color lithograph of the dead being judged by a series of eight "rulers," each wearing Ming official dress and seated behind desks laden with brushes, seals, and documents. The unfortunate souls are not only beaten, cangued, caged, crucified, and beheaded but also sawed limb from limb, impaled, burned, drowned, raped by tigers and wild buffalo (women only), and deep fried.

Such iconography is widely distributed in Chinese space and time. Commoners knew its imagery and arguments through popular books, ballads, folk operas, shadow plays, and depictions in temples and on funeral paintings. Wolfram Eberhard claims that "there can be no doubt that every common man and woman in some way was exposed to these doctrines (1967:59). As David Faure states for the New Territories, a region notorious for localism, "The authority of Ch'ing law did not always prevail, but it was invoked in local disputes even by the illiterate and low status" (1984:52).

#### CONSISTENT PROPERTY RELATIONS, FLEXIBLE LABOR USE

Political-economic pressures of two kinds can be seen as the most significant factors in the creation and reproduction of Chinese kinship: the tributary pressure for unequal distribution of surplus throughout the encompassing hierarchy of the state, with patricorporations at its base; and the petty-capitalist pressures for competitive market exchange among those same patricorporations. These did not develop into two fully autonomous, completely differentiated systems, as if scholar-officials and commoners had created differing class cultures. Caught between conflicting tendencies, households and lineages made compromises that differed according to the relative strength of those tendencies.

In the TMP, "feudal," or "traditional" Chinese kinship system, patricorporations paralleled the state because they employed similar forms of exchange. The "order," "loyalty," "obedience," and other apparently nonmaterial expectations rulers had of their subjects were inextricably bound up with the economic expectations that enable power. "Loyalty" means paying taxes without making a fuss about it, along with other things; "filiality" means supporting one's parents materially, as well as submitting to their wishes. Small children were taught to obey, but as they became adults and could do productive work they learned the full meaning of filiality.

The aspect of kinship practice which remained constant across all Chinese classes and regions was the patrilineal inheritance of means of production, inheritance equally divided among sons (A. Wolf 1989a). Of all aspects of kinship, the relationship between people and property has the greatest significance to the state. States always claim eminent domain over the land and resources they rule, and the ways in which they manage other forms of property rights (as fiefs, as

private property, as communes, etc.) necessarily involve them in the kinship behavior of their subjects. Kin groups that accumulated large properties through strategic marriages worried both European kings and Chinese emperors. Equal inheritance among sons was well suited to reproducing the TMP ideal of an empire of small, predictable, kin-based owner-operator production units.

Although most forms of property were inherited equally by brothers, in the ruling class, hereditary ranks and titles descended in patrilineal primogeniture, with sons of the principal wife outranking sons of other wives. In a household lacking such an heir, these goods were transmitted to the deceased head's younger brother; adoption of nonagnatic heirs was punishable and resulted in the loss of the emoluments to which the kin group might have otherwise been entitled (Staunton 1810: 49–50).

Although among commoners the code required that family headship also descend through primogeniture, it required the equal division of inherited property among brothers. Staunton states that "an unjust or partial division of the patrimony between the elder and younger branches of a family, upon separation, shall . . . be punished." Kin seniors, "provided such parents and grand-parents personally prosecute," could have sons and grandsons punished for deserting them or dividing the inheritance without parental permission. Commoner adoption of nonagnate boys was permitted, though they could not become heirs (1810:526, 92).

Magistrates could and did interpret this law, as well as the precedents that developed from it. Their interpretations were apparently consistent, however, with equal partible patrilineal inheritance. (This remains an outstandingly uniform kinship practice throughout China, although some leeway for variation in customs — giving a larger share to the eldest son's son to support worship of distant ancestors, for example — is permitted.) A man might eject a son from the household, sell him, or kill him for cause, but not disinherit him. Shiga Shuzo points out that paternal attempts at unequal distribution were frustrated, in north China at least, because "the third parties present will refuse to take responsibility" for an uncustomary and illegal act (1978: 136–38, 139). Liabilities were inherited along with assets (Johnston 1910:138–39; Davidson 1967:609–10). Men could not sell land to outsiders without offering it to closely related agnates, although this limitation does not appear to have held for other means of production.<sup>1</sup>

Many cases were settled before kin seniors; patrilineality and partible inheritance among brothers were the key judicial principles. The egalitarian strain of low-technology production — in which labor input counts heavily — supported the equality of brothers in these matters; it was rarely necessary to call in the law to enforce partible inheritance.

1. Except for sons, if we may consider them a means of production. Out-adoption of boys typically required that they too first be offered to agnates before the parents could dispose of them.

To the administrative simplicity of equal-patrilineal-partible inheritance must be added one minor complexity. Property acquired during a person's lifetime — *not* inherited — might be used at its owner's pleasure, as Sung Lung-sheng has shown (1981). Land, perhaps land that had once slipped away from agnatic control as a commodity — was thus more easily alienable by its purchaser — but only for one generation. Once it had been transmitted by inheritance, it was subject to equal division among sons. Children who contributed to such new wealth were likely to make pro-rata claims on it, based on their varied roles in its acquisition. But these claims had to be negotiated. A father's right to dispose of property he acquired himself increased his power to manipulate his children, especially in expansionary times (see Greenhalgh 1994). That power was always open to dispute when it was founded, however narrowly, on his own original inheritance;<sup>2</sup> reasonably filial sons might have reliably expected the law to back their claims to an equal share of their father's inherited estate.

A household without a son sometimes considered uxori-local marriage for a daughter. The frequency and acceptability of this marriage form varies greatly throughout China. In a survey of seven regions focused on the 1920s and 1930s, Arthur Wolf found uxori-local marriage to have been nearly impossible in some areas, commonplace in others (1980, fieldnotes). Uxorilocality appears to be most common where the tributary system was weak — on the fringes of Han society (e.g. Pasternak 1972, 1983, 1985b) or in circumstances in which petty capitalism offered a strong alternative to the tributary expectations of "traditional" kinship.

Uniform Chinese practice in the patrilineal transmission of property determined the relationship between both males and females and the means of production. Women had no property rights as sisters and daughters, though their agnates might protect them against abuse.<sup>3</sup> The loophole for disposal of individually acquired property discussed above may have justified occasional inheritances by women, as it does in contemporary Taiwan. Claims to lifelong and after-death maintenance, though not to ownership of patricorporate property, were valid for wives married by appropriate contract, symbolized by the promise of an ancestral tablet on the altar after death. For the many women who made legally inferior alliances — as concubines or whatever — even motherhood gave no such claim. Dowry was not a "pre-mortem inheritance" right for women — activated before the parents' death — as discussed in Chapter 6.

State support of equal-patrilineal-partible inheritance among agnatic heirs ensured relatively orderly transmission of property over the generations and permitted, indeed almost enjoined, the fractioning of households into two or more new ones at the death of the parents. The creation of joint families of

2. Examples of inheritance and succession in substantial contemporary Taiwan family firms are given in Mark (1972), Numazaki Ichiro (1991:250–54); Oxfeld (1992).

3. — or not (Staunton 1810:566–67).

brothers remaining together past the deaths of their parents was given no institutional encouragement, though this arrangement might have been esteemed as a moral example. The TMP model assumes a world of working adults, their dependent children and elders — living on what they can earn from their inherited property. It does not take into account the possibility — often a reality — that that property may no longer be feasibly divided, that it will no longer support family expansion. Apart from vague injunctions to work hard and be frugal, the TMP vision of kinship offers no solution to population increase on fixed resources.

Land, buildings, and equipment are important means of production; in low-technology systems, labor power is equally important. Labor under a purely TMP regime is not a commodity, for in such a system there is no labor market. All work is performed as tributary duty to superiors and rewarded on the basis of the worker's position in the nation-to-kinship hierarchy. When labor power becomes a commodity, change follows. Commoditization of labor in late-imperial China was stimulated by many forces: the discovery of a new resource or of a new market for an old resource; a state construction project or a newly built seat of government which intensified extractive pressures and drove up population growth; transport improvements; foreign capitalism.

Labor commoditization affects kinship in powerful ways. In the industrializing Taiwan of the early 1970s, kinfolk who had formerly exchanged agricultural labor — one day's work for another — began to rationalize their accounts. As opportunities for wage labor increase, one investigator points out, "Exchange is not considered balanced until the cash value of each man's work is the same," even, or indeed especially, among kin. Kinfolk did not even ask for labor exchange with a relative who had a chance to earn cash elsewhere (Chen Chung-min 1977:112-13). And in the nineteenth century, as silk making employed more women in the Pearl River delta and tea production employed both boys and girls in north Taiwan, extremely unorthodox marriage patterns enjoyed coincident blooms (A. Wolf and Chieh-shan Huang 1980; Stockard 1989). Under the impact of capitalist production for export, the scale and rapidity of change has doubtless been greater than that experienced under indigenous petty capitalism, but similar effects may have resulted. Commoditization of a regional economy may generate differential demand for female or male, older or younger labor, thus differentially affecting kinship practice. The market also offers new or alternative goals for patricorporations.

Although the market often affected the use of kin-as-labor in China, it did not undermine the tributary protections built around agnatic property transmission. Officials continued to stress hierarchy, patrilineality, and male cultural dominance. To TMP imperatives were added those of the PCMP: patricorporate expansion, with property accumulation and the rearing of many sons replacing the cautious transmission of inheritances and the securing of ancestral

successors; households and lineages shaped by contracts and market transactions, not only by "blood and bone." Women, whose connections to means of production were indirect and who were thus less insulated than men from the market, were especially likely to be commoditized. Marriages took many forms, and brideprices may have come wholly to outweigh dowries. Those seeking heirs bought sons when agnatic nephews were not available, and sometimes when they were. Men transformed kin ties into great landowning and trading corporations or, lacking the appropriate kinsmen, constructed lineages by agreeing to be coparceners in a joint estate. The Qing law code set forth consistent guidelines governing the rights and duties of kinsmen in respect to their joint property.

For vast numbers of people, by no means all of them poor, the real choices of life included the PCMP variations on kinship, seen as moral and customary. Delta Guangdongnese and northern Taiwanese believed their heterodox marriage forms to be perfectly legitimate, honorable ones. "Everybody gave away their daughters [as *simpua*, baby daughters-in-law] when I was young," an elderly informant told me in 1980. "We were rich, but Father gave one little sister to the wet nurse, and another to a poor carpenter, because they asked for them. It was just that way." For commoners, their local kinship practices were not reprehensible approximations of propriety but means to the specifically PCMP goals of household expansion and property accumulation, in which people as well as things could be both acquired and disposed of. Only those aspects of the TMP which were privileged by their connection to property and law universally retained prestige. Through them, the patrilineal center held. Readers steeped in Western assumptions that class oppression is likely to be worse than oppression by kinsmen are reminded that the Chinese ruling class, through the state, supported the latter in ways Western states have rarely dared to do. The collusion of state and kin seniors both to exploit and to control commoditized labor is central to understanding Chinese kinship.

#### SHAPING THE JIA THROUGH CONTRACTS

One of the puzzles of Chinese kinship, as I suggested at the beginning of this chapter, is how best to conceptualize the unit known as the *jia*. The difficulty arises because *jia* are ideally units of both people and property, entities defined from the point of view of resource-extracting rulers. Anthropologists often depend on Daniel Kulp's emphasis on the *jia* as the "economic family," variously connected by ties of blood and marriage (1923:148-50). Although it is overwhelmingly common for the members of a *jia* to be thus related, it is not necessary that they be so. Like the *hu* (unambiguously "household") with which it is often used interchangeably, it is an administrative unit including relatives, slaves, servants, and other nonkin, defined ultimately by common administrative con-

nection and by the pooling of resources of its members which this connection connotes. Taiwan's household registers are *hukou*; their heads are not *huzhang*, but *jiazhang*. In common speech there and in contemporary China, one can specify purely kin relations by using "*jia*," but people casually refer to households made up of family and apprentices and workers as "*jia*." At least in rural Fujian and Sichuan, "*jiazhang*" can also refer to lineage heads. "*Jia*" is polysemic, but its core meaning, I would argue, is an orthodoxly constituted production unit at the lowest level of social hierarchy, or the smallest state accounting unit that in an ideal TMP world would be a patrilineal family. Chinese states still require residents to be registered as members of the household, and they formerly forbade household heads to harbor strangers or persons constituting a separate *jia* (Staunton 1810:79–82). Bodde and Morris clarify the official identification of *jia* in late-imperial times as accounting units in a revealing Qing legal case: merchants traveling together were treated as members of a *jia* because they pooled money and goods (1967:193).

Folk ritual expresses the same idea clearly. In the nineteenth century, as now, the major celebratory meals eaten at New Year's were shared not by kinfolk *per se* but by the residents of the household (e.g. Gray 1878, 1:250). Ancestors who failed to provide property for their descendants were not worshiped, nor was the last of the line obliged to try to find an heir for them, as Johnstone remarked in 1910: "The fact is, the possession of property — especially landed property — is regarded in practice as an inseparable condition of the continuation of the ancestral rites. . . . *mei-yu ch'an-yeh mei-yu shen-chu* — 'no ancestral property, no ancestral tablets'" (285). Shiga Shuzo underlines the inseparability of "human beings and property" as the heart of the matter in defining *jia* (1978:121).

The people and things that made up a *jia* were bound indissolubly by the Chinese state. A man could not will ancestral property away from its proper heirs — his sons (and, residually, other close agnates). Nor could he easily alienate his sons from their birthright of property; male out-adoptions were a far graver matter than the disposal of daughters.

In some "pure" TMP world, the people who share means of production would be male agnates and their wives and unmarried daughters: the political-economic molecule and the patrilineal family would overlap neatly. In contact with the PCMP, which offers a market for its products, its means of production, its labor power, and its members, the *jia* seethes with possibilities. It becomes an immensely plastic entity characterized by great freedom to add or delete members, using a wide variety of mechanisms. Most of these mechanisms are strongly reminiscent of market exchanges, protected by contracts.

When markets quantify the value of labor, exchanges among kinfolk increasingly can be seen to have market values rather than as the absolutes of TMP exchange. Relationships within the *jia* move toward becoming negotiated contracts

among parties who, if they are not equal in the household, do have an equality before the market. This equality — far from perfect — may form a significant part of their identities as well as give them bargaining power.

When *jia* (and lineages) are embedded in commodity markets, they can maintain and expand production by various transactions — purchase, pawn, mortgage. Agreements to transfer factors of production usually took the form of written documents: land deeds, partnership agreements, slavery and indenture contracts, marriage agreements, adoption papers, genealogies. Such documents could be produced in court to attest to the nature of the original contract, while their very existence helped to discourage the necessity for resort to the law. Chinese law codes did not distinguish sharply between transactions in things and in people.

Petty capitalists could, of course, acquire property through methods other than inheritance. And it was customary for them to shape the memberships of their patricorporations by means other than patrilineal filiation, major marriage, and close-agnate adoption, the only mechanisms that had the full sanction of TMP validity. Households and lineages were formed by the addition and subtraction of members through contractual agreements of many kinds. Such contracts universally specified a relationship between the parties in terms of economic exchange.

An astute analysis of Chinese child-parent relationships by Susan Greenhalgh invokes the idea of implicit family contracts in contemporary settings. Greenhalgh summarizes research on women industrial laborers to show that parents expect a greater proportion of earnings — all, in principle — of an unmarried daughter's than they do of an unmarried son's. The morality of this arrangement is based, she argues, not on the lesser worth or greater exploitability of daughters but on an implicit contract between parents and children. Parents owe children the expenses of rearing them; children owe parents at least an equivalent return, on which parents may sustain themselves in old age. The difference between daughters and sons (in the implicit contract) is that sons have a lifetime to repay, and so can be cut some slack in their younger years. Daughters will transfer their membership to another family at marriage; they have only their premarital years to make good their filial debt (1985a).

Conversations about Chinese family life produce many examples of such implicit contracts, in which an economic logic very different from that of the TMP reveals a high degree of precision about the worth of *jia* members and their contributions to one another. A Taiwanese college graduate in Chinese literature, having chosen to have no children, spoke to me of fulfilling her marital duty to her mother-in-law: "Mother-in-law would like grandchildren. But I give her twenty or thirty thousand Taiwan dollars every new year, so what can she say?" That kin relations have been the outcomes of negotiations, exchanges, and legal contract is also well attested to for Guangzhou a hundred years ago (Gray 1878,

1:220–21, 233). Earlier, and in a region of China less likely to have been contaminated by foreign capitalism, Huc heard the kin of a sick man weighing the worth of his life against the cost of the medicine that might save him. He describes another occasion, in which a man takes out his fury on his wife by breaking a pot, which, he explains to Huc, is cheaper than replacing the wife, should he kill her by striking her (1970, 2:10–11, 235).

Girls and women were more easily alienated than boys and men from the households to which they belonged. Disposing of them in ways other than orthodox major marriage could help a household solve a property/labor balance, thus contributing to household stability. Did daughters figure in the expansion of family resources as well? Were they obliged by tributary values to repay parents more than was spent on her; as were sons? The obvious answer is “no” — for women married out, and their offspring and adult earnings belonged to other people. But it is useful to peer into the logic behind changes in family expectations of daughters under conditions, such as those of present-day Taipei and Chengdu, in which many women earn respectable incomes and own productive wealth. Here, tributary gender identity matters less than the market value of money and labor. Among Taiwan’s educated women (see Tsui 1987) and among laborer/artisan/small-business families I have studied there (and in Sichuan), “daughters are now treated like sons.” Traditionally, a daughter’s obligation to repay her filial debt ceased at marriage, as the popular phrase “Married daughters are spilled water” attests. As economic opportunities for women have expanded, however, mothers in such families more and more claim with pride that their married daughters too now are very filial, that is, the daughters continue to give them money. Such gifts are often cited in discussions of how it is now probably better (for mothers, at least) to have daughters than sons. Sons are overly attached to their wives, live separately, and often give less to parents than parents expect. Daughters like to come for visits, even persuading their husbands to live in or near Mother’s apartment, and prefer their own mother’s influence over their children to that of a mother-in-law. Husbands worry that wives are slipping money to their own mothers out of household or patriline funds.

Daughters may not give as much money as sons, but that they do give is emphasized and seen with great satisfaction as a proper economic response to better times and as a proof of genuine affection. A daughter could easily cite Confucian principle, in-law or husbandly pressure, or her own children’s needs as excuses for following past practice and ceasing to contribute to her parent’s family (referred to correctly in Chinese as a woman’s *niang jia*, mother’s family) after marriage, and some doubtless do. But many do not, and contemporary parents glow when they can boast of such a daughter.

It appears that a daughter’s duty to repay the actual expenses of rearing her may have been conditioned more by women’s limited economic opportunities

than by her differential duties as a female child. In the past, few married women had cash incomes, and what they had was needed for the nuclear families they were building. The postmarital economic future of the young female factory workers on whose actions Greenhalgh’s analysis is largely based is not likely to be bright. Many of them will have little to give their mothers, as their parents can easily estimate. But given sufficient, relatively equal resources and opportunities, a daughter’s “contract,” viewed in strictly economic terms, is not unlike that of a son, when both are equal, or relatively so, before the market.

A *jia* was shaped in its creation and its dissolution by kinship law, insistently reasserted in the most forceful terms by Chinese rulers; it was sometimes as insistently reinterpreted by Chinese people attempting to survive and prosper under the PCMP. Where petty capitalism was strong, a household balance between labor power and means of production may have been redressed through more flexible mechanisms than those with which the state endowed Chinese patriline. Consequently, *jia* became the principal units of commodity production by groups representing themselves as kin.

#### ANCESTRAL PROPERTY, “CAPITAL,” AND PETTY-CAPITALIST ACCUMULATION

Thus far I have avoided characterizing the means of production inherited, bought, and otherwise accumulated by Chinese households as “capital.” Capital, strictly speaking, exists only where the capitalist mode of production dominates all other forms — although Marx’s use of “merchant capital” allows a loophole here. Petty capitalism can be distinguished from capitalism partly by the examination of the nature of the “ancestral property” that formed the bulk of privately owned means of production.

Capital according to Marx “is not a thing, it is a definite social relation of production, pertaining to a particular historical social formation. . . . Capital is not the sum of the material and produced means of production. . . . It is the means of production . . . monopolized by a particular section of society [vis-à-vis] living labour power” (1981:953). In James Wessman’s felicitous phrase, “Wage labor and capital reciprocally cause and condition each other” (1981:243). In consequence, as another scholar notes, “The individual is objectified in private property and therefore in thought and social life . . . [and] both labor and means of production (capital) are ‘free’ and therefore capable of self-expansion” (Hart 1992:46). Although means of production exist outside of capitalism, capital becomes its historically powerful, significant “true self” only in historical contexts in which, as another scholar defines it, “the production of capital predominates, and dominates every other sort of production” (Bottomore 1983:60). It “concretizes” the unpaid portion of the human labor power which has gone into making it and stands as a monument less to the entrepre-

neurial skill of the capitalist than to the exploitation of workers paid less than the value of their work.

Chinese people also see their ancestral property as concretized labor, created by the sweat and toil of real work by real people in the past. The accumulations in the hands of men and kin seniors taken from women and kin juniors do not fit Marx's definition of capital, developed to describe European conditions including very different gender and kinship relationships. But the definition illuminates the way household means of production are expanded through the unrewarded work of kinfolk, through their commoditization, or through their elimination. People do not voice this aspect of capital accumulation; the ancestors are envisioned as self-directed adult men, righteously benefiting from their own hard work. People do not describe family estates as the material result of exploitation. Just as the bourgeois prefers to see capital as the material consequence of entrepreneurial skill rather than of the workers' exploitation, so do Chinese prefer to see ancestral property as the product of virtuous frugality, rather than — at least in part — of babies killed, children sold, daughters married for brideprices, sons sent to sojourn in alien lands, women and children hungrier and colder than grown men. Ancestral property both represents and reproduces the living social relations of inequality within the household, just as capital in the strict sense represents and reproduces the relations of production between propertied and propertyless classes. Ancestral property is sacred, protected not by sentiment alone, but by law. Latent collective rights by both lineal and collateral agnates forbid our describing household means of production — especially land — as the completely free-moving "capital" of the capitalist mode of production.

The constant possibility of owning or increasing one's means of production in the PCMP resembles the process in capitalism known as primitive accumulation, described as "the process by which small-scale producers such as peasants are divorced from their direct connection to the means of production and their properties are accumulated in relatively few hands. . . . Primitive accumulation . . . is part of the same process for which the term 'proletarianization' is also used. That is, there was not only a period of primitive accumulation, prior to the rise of capitalism as we usually think of it, but this process continues to occur as non- and precapitalist modes of production are incorporated into the capitalist world-system" (Wessman 1981:241-42). In the Chinese case, at every generation, tributary pressures channel the rewards of work away from some household members toward others. In petty-capitalist contexts, market pressures exaggerate the initial tributary imbalances, sometimes to the point that tributary obligations to kin are ignored. Households that succeed in accumulation enter factor markets with an advantage, forcing other households to follow in a competitive spiral.

When we look at family land and shops from the point of view of social relations within the household, we see not capital but ancestral property. But when we observe the relationships among households under Chinese commodity production, we see something that can almost be called capital. For centuries, households hired labor in and out as a normal part of agrarian and artisan life. The classic owner-operator household often did both to take full advantage of temporary labor needs and surpluses. This typical "middle peasant" strategy was unlikely to produce very substantial accumulations of means of production. The same strategy by holders of larger properties who hired workers at less than the value they produced, enabled relatively rich Chinese to become close analogs to European mercantile and rent capitalists.

Their accumulations through this mechanism look remarkably like capital, in the strict sense. Interclass exploitation, as well as intrahousehold inequality of reward, kept drawing means of production out of the hands of the children, women, and poor families that went to the wall in this fierce competition, and into the hands of male owners of large means of production. But the double nature of exploitation prevented this tendency from reaching the momentum that produced true capitalism elsewhere. Chinese petty capitalists had traditional authority to exploit themselves and members of their *jia* at levels that more impersonal employers would not have dared to demand (Harrell 1982:108-13, 1987; Niehoff 1987). Surpluses extracted from within the household were antagonistic to those extracted between households. A household head, pressed too hard by the processes of exploitation which bore upon him from wealthier households, could not only convert family members into the wherewithal to resist engulfment but also continue to reproduce more members for whatever purpose. Labor power was "free" as it circulated among *jia*, but not individualized, or free, vis-à-vis its *jia*.

Parental authority to exploit the young may have been as much responsible for "braking" the accumulation of true capital in Chinese society as any other factor. The exploitation of the labor power of one household by another could happen, in part, because poor households with no means of production rented out their members. Households normally made strenuous attempts to retain their members, doubtless for affective as much as for economic reasons. At many times and places in China, however, kin seniors calculated the relative economic value of keeping or disposing of household members to preserve a balance between their available means of production and the number of males needed to perpetuate its ownership. Except for babies who were killed or neglected to death, most of these "extra" people became members of other households, as wives, adopted daughters and sons, and bondspeople. More labor power was transferred by the contractualized movement of persons between *jia* than by the transfer of labor power through wage work. The truly capitalist tendency for capital accumulated through the exploitation of wage labor to snowball tends toward the

creation of relatively few but large owners of capital. This tendency was damped in China by the direct reallocation of persons among patricorporations. These varied in their prosperity, as Greenhalgh has cogently argued, with their dependency ratios (1985b). What Greenhalgh and other Chayanovian theorists ignore for China, however, is how rigorously kin seniors intervened in late traditional times to keep those ratios manageable.

# 6

## Patricorporations: The Lineage

They will go from city to village, from county to [prefecture] . . . collecting money to build up an ancestral hall. They will fraudulently give themselves out as the descendants of some famous men, and all the worthless characters struggle to imitate them, so that there are many of this kind. . . . The money left over from the building of the ancestral hall is used either to buy more land or is stored as money or grain often being lent out to members of the same [surname]. The simple people who depend on the ancestral hall are thus exploited by having to pay interest.

— Memorial Regarding the Abuses of the Ancestral Halls  
in Kiangsi, 1764

Some people say that the Li lineage became so large because they were the first settlers, and naturally all their descendants are named Li. Some say that it's because they have such good geomantic gravesites. The real reason, though, is that once they got a little power, everyone else wanted to marry their daughters and take on the Li name. The Li lineage ate up all our sons.

— Wang Weimin, Fujianese villager, summer 1990

Because of daily self-interest, the legal obligations incumbent on kinfolk, and the ultimate economic unity imposed on households, Chinese people had no choice but to organize themselves as *jia*. A *jia* thus wore two faces: it was the unit within which one must live and from which escape was, in theory, impossible (should it be desirable); and it was the legitimate social instrument with which to wrest a living from a hard world. The state did not require people to belong to a lineage (as to a *jia*), but to do so was to gain the leverage of a powerful political-economic tool.

Lineages are only partially homologous to *jia*, although, as David Faure points out, some observers and Chinese "officialdom tended to see the lineage as an ex-

tension of the household" (1986:129). Lineages were constructed in part from the same ideological elements that pinned *jia* in place, but these elements were used to create social units with much broader capacities than those the state envisaged for households. Endowed with official legitimacy by the logic that supported agnatic kinship as a fundamental bond, they were an unimpeachable mechanism for collectively confronting both the state and the market. Just as *jia* faced both the tax collector and the employer, so did lineages enable men to enter the distinct competitions for tribute and for capital. They did this through amassing lineage estates that were ritually sanctioned, legally protected, collectively held, and inalienable.

In lineages, which began to take modern form in the Song, we find tributary principles operating in a commoditized economy to shape popular organizations that could siphon resources from the TMP into the world of commoners. Lineages, sometimes, expanded into petty capitalism's analog of the capitalist business corporation.

#### LINEAGE ORIGINS

The history of lineage development from the Song, as we learn from the volume edited by Patricia Buckley Ebrey and James L. Watson (1986; see Davis, Dennerline, Hazelton, Hymes, Naquin, and Watson) and from David Faure (1986) reveals the often contradictory nature of lineage construction. The materials on which such research is based show how wealthy families sought prestige within and direct personal links to the TMP by concentrating on lineages as accumulators of tributary power. These materials are far less helpful for our unraveling of the ways in which large-scale patricorporatizations enabled important members of lineages to further their petty-capitalist ends. But a growing body of evidence supports the claim that lineage organizations could both assert official status and claim official perquisites, on the one hand, and legitimate and expand private production, on the other.

David Faure's study of the distinction between lineage and village in the Hong Kong region speaks to a four-hundred-year process of the penetration of rural villages organized around settlement rights in pioneered territory by the kind of lineage organization now well known from the structural analyses of Maurice Freedman (1958, 1966, 1974b), the social history of Faure (1986, 1989), and from much recent ethnography (e.g. Baker 1968, Potter 1968, Pasternak 1969, Ahern 1973, J. Watson 1975, R. Watson 1985). Similar penetrations of territorial groups by kin ideology must have occurred, with regionally differing results, in many parts of China since the Song. We know that the lineage form itself was created in the process of such penetration (Ebrey and Watson 1986). In analyzing Hong Kong lineages, Faure stresses their most elaborated form, in which large corporate bodies symbolized their unity through written genealogies, tightly controlled ances-

tor worship, graveyards, and large, free-standing lineage halls. Such lineages were "the unintentional creation of official policies" (1986:165). The connection of rising kin groups to official Neo-Confucian culture was realized by appropriate ritual, lineage support for members' education, and by the gaining of official position. The rich who wished not only for further riches but to transcend the limited status that wealth alone could give, constructed lineages replete with the appropriate structure and symbolism. By the Ming, such forms existed, had official support, and thus directly channeled seekers after power into the use of specific organizational forms. An important element in the historically earlier construction of such legitimacy was the Song state practice of permitting a restricted number of candidates to join the civil service through agnatic ties to ranking scholar-officials or to prominent court personalities. Such rank brought the privileges of government stipends, various tax exemptions, and social prestige (Davis 1986:62), thus giving material value within the tributary system to patrilineal ties.

As recruitment tightened, another advantage of agnatic cohesion may have come to the fore. When it became less easy to appoint a particular young relative to a "protected" position, it was more necessary for kinsmen to broaden the pool of talent from which to draw trustworthy successors. Lineage organization stressing the virtual interchangeability of men of the same generation made it almost as advantageous to train a patrilineal nephew as a son, or a distant agnate as a near one. Supported by a whole lineage through the arduous years of competition for posts, the successful official owed his debt to that collectivity; any agnate who could make use of the successful man's political leverage had a right to demand it. Although even a large, rich, and enduring household could expect to produce an official only occasionally, by pooling their male kin juniors, members of a lineage greatly increased their chances of finding a reliable official connection.

A 1794 scandal illustrates how establishing this connection might be accomplished and the risks it sometimes entailed. A candidate gained a degree in Hankou, where he was not legally registered and where he thus had had no right to sit for the examination. When he was exposed by a rival, provincial authorities not only nullified the degree and punished various concerned officials but revealed a wider pattern of illegal registration for examinations. Some men were claiming descent from registered Hankou families in order to be eligible to be examined there. Worse yet, resident merchants were importing young agnates and claiming them as sons in order to better the young men's chances of making it into examination quotas. This practice, William Rowe notes, suggests the possibility "that nationally prominent mercantile families may have systematically established locally registered branches at various commercial centers throughout China and routinely shuttled their heirs back and forth between local examinations, thus multiplying their chances for success." The same thing was going on in Hangzhou

and Suzhou, at any rate (1984:240-42). Men traveled from Quanzhou and Zhangchou to Taiwan at about the same time to take exams illicitly, perhaps using the same stratagem (Vertente et al. 1991:131).

When family circumstances made male adoption necessary, the insistence on preferential adoption of sons from within the lineage emphasized the degree to which boys were seen as a human resource whose loyalties ought not to be diluted by affiliations with outsiders. The ease of such adoptions from branch to branch (like transfers of children among brothers in contemporary Taiwan) stressed the ideal of interchangeability of members of a generation which makes a lineage "like" but larger than, a household.

Another element of the form lineages were to take may have been set as early as the Tang, when the highest-ranking officials were allowed to build altars (*miao*) to more generations of ascendants than were lower-rankers, while the lowest officials and commoners were restricted to offering ancestral worship in their own homes (Ebrey 1986:21). Ability to define agnatic connections through worship was thus specified differently for people of different ranks. By Qing times, when such rules no longer applied, much greater prestige was still attached to worship in free-standing ancestral halls than to that performed in domestic structures (Faure 1986: 148).

The state made constant efforts to control the ideological conditions under which lineages continued to exist. Song officials were uneasy at the presence of large descent groups not headed by educated leaders (Ebrey 1986:20) — that is, by a cadre of men socialized into the values of the TMP. Lineages were "exterminated" by early Ming emperors for crime or rebellion (Faure 1984:34-35), a sign that their adherence to the supremely feudal virtue of loyalty had failed.

Steered by such instances of state emphasis on agnatic unity, lineages took their modern form as they sought to legitimate local contention for power against the state. The numerous ancestral halls built in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Hong Kong were, Faure claims, "symbols of territorial and lineage unity: fronts, if one wishes to call them that, behind which the segmented bodies tracing common descent might appear as corporate bodies in regional politics and in dealings with the *yamen*" (1986:159-60). These bodies sought as well, it must be believed, to tap into sources of tribute to which patricorporations with ruling-class members might lay claim, to strengthen their ability to extract the wealth that made the entry into that class possible, and to avoid paying tribute on that wealth (Siu 1989:37).

As Freedman and others have argued, officialdom feared lineage power that could compete with its own for wealth. Lineage competition and hence inequality may often have been exacerbated by periods of state weakness. Much of the sharp class differentiation to be found around Hong Kong dates from the aftermath of a massive forced population move inland in 1662. The evacuation, which caused immense hardship, was rescinded after seven years. The period

that followed was something of a free-for-all, as those who had managed to remain claimed their own and other people's property against the demands of returning kin groups. Rubie Watson states that "the structure of dominance . . . found in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Hsin-an can be traced to the period of great prosperity that followed the dislocation of the evacuation. Most of the institutions (for example, corporate estates, ancestral halls, markets, temple committees) that a few lineages used to establish their power and authority over others date from, or were substantially expanded during, the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" (1985:21-22). Hilary Beattie's research describes a similar pattern of economic expansion accompanied by sharp interlineage inequality following a devastating rebellion in Anhui in the mid-seventeenth century (1979:44-47). Interlineage inequality may have arisen in times when, with TMP controls relaxed or impotent, petty-capitalist competition led to both economic expansion and the monopolization of resources by the strongest groups.

Where lineages were especially strong, they were a tax-dodging device (Faure 1989:24). Their success at denying tax revenues to the state was sometimes instrumental in limiting the state's ability to act locally. In areas where official power was comparatively weak, lineages depended on their own force of arms to hold their claims. In areas of state strength, lineages competed more in lawsuits than on the battlefield. Whether buying peace with taxes was a good bargain is difficult to decide, for superior force (*not* the equality of the marketplace!) usually decided this social contract in favor of officialdom. Regions such as the southeast coast where officials could not stamp out lineage political autonomy ("feuding") were also regions where they had difficulty in collecting taxes and suppressing petty capitalism.

#### LINEAGES AND COMMODITY PRODUCTION

People invented and then used the lineage both to attain office and to validate the status achieved by officeholding, as Faure points out (1986:144). The lineage was effective as well in expanding commodity production. A lineage could be "a partnership, formed in much the same way as a business partnership might have been formed" (1989:24). In eighteenth-century Taiwan men of the same surname "took . . . an ancestor on the mainland . . . as an object of common worship, and, by contractually subscribing to shares, organized *ho-yueh-tzu* [common shares] lineage organizations." They purchased land to rent out for income to support ritual; these lineages contrast with lineages founded on blood relations and were more like community ritual groups (*shenming hui*) and other local affinity organizations than descent groups (Chuang Ying-chang 1987:194-96). Although arguing in this paper that contractually founded lineages were stimulated by frontier conditions, Chuang has since found similar ones in heavily petty-capi-

talist Fujian, from which the immigrants came (personal communication, 12 March 1992). In Taiwan, where petty capitalism operated freely and where links to the tributary system were few, lineages did not stress the examination route to success. In the later nineteenth century, although Taiwan had a generous quota of examination places and vigorous lineages, few men applied for the exams (Ver-tente et al. 1991:131).

Joining with one's agnates to form a lineage was an effective strategy for accumulating the initial resources that made social mobility possible. A rare Chinese Horatio Alger might enter officialdom via self-instruction on the back of a water buffalo, but most members of the ruling class from the Song on were drawn from the ranks of prosperous kin groups. In Song Suzhou, a time and place in which dramatic social mobility was possible, Robert Hartwell states that "sixty-three families provided ninety per cent of all the successful candidates between 960 and 1279" (1982:419). The path upward was plain: the paternal generation made profits and paid for a son or nephew to earn a degree; the filial generation got appointed and received tribute. The protection state kinship ideology offered to productive resources labeled as ancestral — rather than individual or private — property was extremely important to successful social climbers. A rich man's wealth was easily confiscated; a lineage's sacrificial land (or brick kiln or pawnshop) was a sacred trust officials felt bound to honor.

The Western sinologist's phobia about being accused of economic determinism (too Marxist, or not Marxist enough), combined with the nature of Chinese source materials (heavy on glorifying ancestral worthies, all-too-tactful about how the worthies made their money) has left what is probably the central issue in lineage studies — economic activities — seriously understudied.<sup>1</sup> The problem may be rooted in the gender ideology of those who wrote the sources on which historians must rely. Anthropologists are more fortunate: they can ask Chinese women the necessarily crass questions, and get more straightforward answers. In Hong Kong's New Territories, Rubie Watson learned much from women about the origins of the inequalities of two neighboring hamlets belonging to the same lineage:

Unlike their husbands, Sik Kong Wai women are very forthright in their condemnation of San Wai's landlord families. . . . [The] women would point in the direction of San Wai and say that all of Ha Tsuen's landlords and money-

1. Patricia Buckley Ebrey argues against an economic (or political) origin of descent group cohesion, attributing it to changes in religious views especially about worship at grave sites in the Tang (1986:29). Inherently suspicious of ideas as independent causes of behavior, I suggest that the well-known use of grave sites as claims to pioneered or reclaimed property was as likely as anything else to have motivated increased attention to graves in a time when Han settlement of the south was the most significant source of cultural change. My (Han) father's bones in *your* (non-Han) fields is the Chinese equivalent of planting the flag on Hispaniola. Any sensible state would encourage such symbolism.

lenders live there. It was these people, the women maintain, who in the past owned all the land and lent them money at high rates of interest. . . . their husbands are more reticent. It is not that these men are blind to the fact that the landlord-merchants lived in larger houses, ate better food, and owned more land than they did. Rather, they imply that these matters are not a proper topic of conversation. (1985:102)

Most argument about the significance of lineage property to the solidarity, power, and existence of the lineage revolves around land as essential to corporateness. Inevitably, in preindustrial China, lineages were more likely to own, and profit from, land than from other resources. The scholarly literature now presents a fairly clear picture of this aspect of lineage economy. Sometimes lineage land was farmed in rotation or by the poorest members at a lower-than-market rent; sometimes it was rented at market rates to anyone, or to nonkin only, to maximize income. Where agriculture was profitable because of the proximity of urban markets, or because of special environmental advantages, however, lineages invested heavily in land reclamation and in the expansion of commercial crops. To carry forward our understanding of lineages as petty-capitalist corporations, we should focus on two issues: first, on the surplus-generating accumulation of lineage means of production; and second, on the different allocations of this surplus: egalitarian redistribution, tributary-style appropriation, and consumption by lineage power holders, and petty-capitalist reinvestment. Lineage regulations typically required that surplus should be distributed by tributary principles. It should be available: according to need to impoverished members, to all boys equally for education, to degree holders as ranked stipends, and to (male) members at large through age- and generation-graded access to food at sacrifices. Where a cash surplus existed, it was to be allocated by various systems, to men either as individuals or as representatives of particular lines (see Potter 1968:108–10). Yet somehow pools of ancestral property accumulated and flowed into channels other than those prescribed by lineage rules.

Some lineages both obtained and used surpluses as capital, seizing surplus value by underpaying producers and then reinvesting it. Large southern lineages, especially those of Guangzhou, about which we are best informed, generally invested in the production of agricultural commodities. A lineage capitalized the clearing or draining of land or the building or improving of irrigation systems, or it encouraged the production of regional specialties (Siu 1989:25–33, 36–37, 54, 59; R. Watson 1990). Much of the land reclamation on which New Territories lineage wealth was based was situated not on some remote frontier but in the hinterlands of major cities to which the rice, vegetables, or fibers produced there could easily be sold (Faure 1986:173). Such lineages indeed "put their money into land" but not, or not primarily, into household plots on which a peasant love of the soil was

the only surplus beyond subsistence. They constructed the polders on which their crops grew. They raised productivity to the point where their products fed and clothed city workers as well as their own members. They were often processors and merchants of the resulting commodities as well (Siu 1989:59–62, 128–29). The Pearl River delta was transformed by such petty-capitalist lineage efforts; the tea country of northern Taiwan was similarly opened, held against Aborigines, and brought into the tea trade by patent holders, some of which may have been lineages that had the necessary “pull” in the capital to obtain land patents (Shepherd 1993:227–28; but see 315). What Philip Huang (1985) has called tenurial landlordism was a classic petty-capitalist pattern in which the landlords were sometimes cliques of powerful lineage leaders who rented, or refused to rent, to their own kinsmen.

Detailed examples of lineages whose funds were invested in nonagricultural production are scarce. We know that lineages (and their segments) owned markets, moneylending ventures, commercial establishments, and shipping firms and sometimes indirectly controlled property through temples (Faure 1986:153–55). As Ng Chin-keong has shown, they were essential in Fujianese trade in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, providing manpower and what can only be called commercial capital for voyages (1983:216). Further:

Maritime trade was the most important factor affecting the lineage organization. With capital derived originally from land and backed by large lineage organizations providing manpower, the prominent local families were able to monopolize the great profits from trade. They sent out their relatives or servants as managing “partners” for the risky voyages. The relationship of the two parties was that between superior and inferior rather than that of an equal partnership. The need for trade assistants also gave birth to a new custom in Fukien, that of adopting foster children [to travel abroad for commercial enterprises and perhaps later to be uxori locally married, thus becoming “true sons”]. (29)

Ng discusses at length these commercially motivated adoptions and the formation of pseudo-lineages by the aggregation of several surnames: “Because the authorities would be suspicious of local associations of this kind, the new aggregate functioned under the officially acceptable form of ‘lineage’ ” (29–32).

An agnatic group in Ming/Qing Zhili, Naquin tells us, supported itself on earnings from leadership in one of the White Lotus sects, amassing considerable wealth from “city dwellers or itinerant people: urban vegetable farmers, artisans, shop owners, barbers, Taoist priests and nuns, metalsmiths, tailors, peddlers, geomancers. . . . Resources were apparently invested in the Longevity-Peak Temple, the ancestral shrine, and the common task of proselytizing, which in turn generated new income.” This lineage lived on its esoteric skill capital until, in a government sweep of the heterodox in 1821, all the founder’s known descendants

(136 persons) were executed or exiled and their property confiscated and sold. “Two hundred years after Wang Tao-sen’s own death, his descendants received the punishments for which they had long been legally liable” (Naquin 1986:235, 237, 239).

From the fifteenth to the eighteenth century, two Zhejiang lineages near Xiang Lake ran an important brick and tile industry, described by R. Keith Schoppa. They sold construction materials to Hangzhou and Shaoxing, at one time employing 210 kiln households from one of the lineages (1989:54, 70, 77, 115). Industry was combined with commerce and agriculture; the brickmaking — with its associated dredging, wood cutting, mixing, firing, and portage — were mostly done outside of the agricultural season (115). Other nearby lineages based power on wealth gained from a salt franchise, fishponds, and a variety of lacustrine cash crops. In these lineages, petty-capitalist earnings allowed some members to “concentrate on the civil service route to solidify and perhaps legitimate existing local economic power” (136). Some leading households were “centers of comparative wealth in an expanse of general poverty” (76). One of the richest built several Buddhist temples and shrines that “symbolized his ties to Buddhism and represented the charitable display of riches and dedication to strengthening *individual* [Schoppa’s italics] karmic wealth” (77). This history recounts the experience of patricorporate producers who in the Song found it relatively easy to “seduce local officials into silence and connivance” (47), but who slowly entangled themselves in the temptations and risks of officialdom, seduced in their turn by ruling-class power and perks. Schoppa’s work strengthens the hope that much more evidence exists for the economic and especially the nonagricultural activities from which lineages built themselves into petty-capitalist corporations.

Lineage membership itself can be seen as patricorporate property, as we saw when junior kin were pooled for examination purposes. Where the heirs necessary to continuity failed to appear, lineages permitted their constituent households to adopt from agnates, but found nonkin adoptions morally and legally troublesome.<sup>2</sup> Some lineages, however, acquired human resources with a free hand, ignoring agnatic ideals. In Ming Guangdong they sometimes adopted men to take on their own military obligations, then dropped the adoptees’ descendants from their books (Faure 1989:22). Fujianese lineages were notorious for taking in talented outsiders and labor power through adoption (Ng 1983:29); in Fujian today, people in many regions describe prerevolution lineages as eager to add to their manpower for work and war through adoption and uxori local marriage. Ann Beth Waltner notes that in commercialized Qing Anhui, adopting unrelated male heirs may have furthered the setting up of branch firms: “An

2. See Ball 1982 for an effective summary of adoption practices and Waltner 1990 for a detailed exploration of this topic.

adopted son is more reliable than an ordinary employee, yet more expendable than a biological son." From the Ming on, officials tried to keep separate the roles of son and hired hand, while commoner employers illegally purchased bondservants whom they disguised as adopted sons (Waltner 1990: 90, 83-87). The large Guangdong lineages' tributary orthodoxy on marriage and adoption is accounted for in the next chapter.

In the contemporary world, Chinese lineages have shown themselves to be clever and innovative economic actors. Perhaps the best-known example is the Man lineage of the New Territories, whose travel agency and restaurants have been documented by James L. Watson. The Man's most efficient and productive restaurants are family businesses, with nearly all other businesses operated by lineage mates in a variety of partnerships (1975:109, 107). The accessibility of resources through the trust agnatic ties engenders has made it possible for Man members to chain-migrate and prosper in considerable numbers.

Large lineages, especially those that produced for and traded with capitalist outsiders, pushed hard on the concept of petty capitalism. They acted (or their leaders did) as capitalists act, and it is difficult not to call their accumulations capital. Had their influence been powerful enough to unseat tributary rule — in southeast China, for example — a Chinese polity dominated by a truly capitalist class might have emerged. Under such circumstances, the tributary rights of lineage members would surely have eroded quickly, leaving only market and contract to govern relations among kin. Because no such bourgeois revolution in fact occurred, I conceptualize lineages as petty-capitalist patricorporations, not capitalist corporations. My first two lines of argument toward this conclusion have already been made in Chapter 2. Whatever we call these social structures, they did not drive China into machine-assisted industrialism and a different demographic dynamic; and, until a capitalist class comes to dominate society, social relations will not be transformed by capitalism. The third reason is that, because tributary power continued to structure society, lineage relations of production, even in the southeast, contained a large admixture of kin duties along with wage employment. Maintaining inequality among workers as *kinfolk* was key to the tributary control of would-be capitalism.

#### LINEAGES AND INEQUALITY

Internal inequality that transcended tributary hierarchy and dispossessed members of tributary rights was a well-known feature of many lineages. Some was structural inequality — tributary logic requiring agnates to be differentiated along lines of age, generation, and polygynously married mothers. But as Rubie Watson points out, "To have any structural significance, differentiation within the Chinese lineage must be based on the incorporation of property, usually land, into ancestral estates (*tsu*). To establish a new segment a man must do more than

marry and produce sons; he and his descendants must have enough personal property to endow an estate. . . . economic differences among agnates, far from being opposed to or in conflict with the Chinese system of descent, are in fact of fundamental importance to that system" (1985:37).

But, Watson continues, "What . . . kept the [Deng] lineage from dissolving into discrete resource-holding units, each attempting to dominate its less affluent agnates? Why did the rich not deny their relationship with the poor or subordinate and enserf them, as sometimes happened among agnates in Indian society?" (37). Much of the remainder of her study is an answer to this important question. Descent among the Deng is discussed as a conceptual system and a set of complex social practices.

Watson is surely correct in refusing to "reduce descent simply to a matter of property relations." Yet the inequalities of property were continuously reproduced, despite the constant cultural admonishment to fraternity. Her study of "inequality among brothers" shows us much about why the Deng were less unequal than they might have been; and rather less about why, within a single lineage, she found the kind of economic disproportion that so exasperated the women of Sik Kong Wai. Perhaps, as is so often the case in Chinese studies, the capitalist-like dynamics of Chinese life appear so natural, so much the general order of the universe, that they seem to require no analysis. A persistent bias toward interpreting Chinese society in terms derived primarily from the "great tradition" of TMP ideology deflects attention from its material relationships and from the ideological dimensions of petty capitalism.

As lineages accumulated wealth, when was it simply consumed in ritual or redistributed among agnates, and when was it used as capital is used: reinvested to create ever-greater wealth? For a powerful lineage member to have used common income for individual purposes was sometimes merely corruption, but it could also have been an act consistent with a different set of principles. Petty-capitalist logic and morality argue strongly for accumulation and investment and discourage consumption. Investment that enhanced a man's position to the point where he could help his kinsmen on a grand scale could easily be seen as legitimate, especially to the man in question. Whether help actually trickled down to poorer agnates may have depended on how consistently lineage leaders reinvested rather than redistributed joint income. Where pressure to redistribute to the poorest members conflicted with the desire and opportunity to invest, leaders had a key role in deciding how much welfare consumption the group would continue to support. Lineage regulations made it relatively easy to define the poor as low-class no-accounts who engaged in disreputable occupations and flouted high standards of morality by marrying widows or by performing domestic ritual shabbily. When so defined, they could be excluded from membership rather than kept on lineage welfare, a move that reduced the consumption burden. As Faure points out, "Not only does a lineage segment, but it also continually displaces the

weaker and poorer lines from its midst" (1986:64). Such actions, however rationalized, were not likely to appear often in records whose purpose was to validate lineage organization in terms of tributary principle.

If lineages had functioned as relatively egalitarian redistributive units, the class differentiation among their members would have been far less marked than it sometimes was. In an eight-village Hong Kong lineage described by Jack M. Potter, "most large ancestral estates in the village belonged to wealthy lineage segments . . . which contained few farmers. On the other hand, most farmers in the village were from relatively poor lineage segments that owned only small ancestral estates. Thus, most farmers in the village and in the two adjoining villages . . . rented land from the large . . . ancestral estates in which they had no share" (1968:81). Even under the restrictive conditions imposed by the British in Hong Kong, lineage leaders held authority over ancestral estates and thus managed the reproduction of internal inequalities along with their property. Their attempts to accumulate capital for their closest kin while conforming to principles governing the organization of the lineage as a whole often led to complex and inconsistent choices.

In a contemporary lineage in which 93 percent of the members' land was held in lineage trusts, the ranking leader of each principal segment, Potter says, "has the responsibility of announcing and chairing all meetings of the group called to make decisions concerning the management of disposition of the ancestral lands. . . . [He] must sign all lease agreements concerning the ancestral lands before the contract is valid, and [he has] the power to renew the leases of existing tenants." Such leaders now and in the past normally acted on behalf of wealthy and powerful members who were able to manipulate both rental and sale of estate land. Potter notes that "in traditional times as at present, usually only a handful of men of the group know about the financial affairs of the ancestral estate," with the result that embezzlement (of which he cites several serious cases) was not difficult, and was much feared (1968: 103-4, 106-7). Secretly renting estate land to favored kin at a low rate that enables the renter to profit from cash crops or higher-rental subleasing (113-14) hovers between illegitimacy and proper concern for duty to one's closest kin.

Lineage leaders had the choice of whether to follow the feudal kinship logic of the TMP or the contractual kinship logic of the PCMP in the disbursement of collective resources. It is consistent with the scattered data as I know them that, where commodity production was vigorous, petty-capitalist morality often prevailed. Under such circumstances, lineages became more sharply stratified internally, with subordinate members acting as tenants and employees of their class/kin leaders, rather than as a body of brothers.

Lineage villages such as the Lin Family Garden of Banqiao, Taiwan, diagrammed their social relations in their architecture: elegant palaces, with separate women's quarters, gardens, a theater, and grand ancestral halls housed the

important households; small row houses sheltered the hundreds of working-class families. The history of this nineteenth-century testament to lineage inequality has been edited by economic interest. Its recent reconstruction as a public park has resulted in the destruction of its sociological significance. To save part of their property, the Lins razed the working-class dwellings, leaving the false impression that all coresident Lins lived in grand style.

Kin ties between the classes in large lineages have often been described as ameliorating (or even eradicating) class conflict in Chinese society. The legal bias toward tributary kinship ideals gave poorer members some claim on their richer agnates. Theft from kinsmen was punished more lightly than that from nonkin (Bodde and Morris 1967:247-48, 297), apparently on the principle that kinship coincides with economic pooling; charitable support of poor members was not only a pious fiction. Yet kin ties between lineage-mates of different classes may equally be seen as a state-supported form of labor discipline. If rebellion against economic exploiters could not be handled within the lineage, the laws condemning violence against kin seniors could be invoked in all their severity.

#### LINEAGE VARIATION

The best-known Chinese lineages were large corporate bodies with substantial collectively held property important in local political economies, notably in Guangzhou, Fujian, and the lower Yangzi Valley. More common and more widely distributed were small bodies of agnates with little or no collective property. Such lineages have had considerable significance in Chinese society and cannot be ignored as merely underdeveloped examples of the more complex type.

The larger, estate-centered lineages had a narrower distributional range, concentrating in the southeast coast and Yangzi Valley regions. Found only sporadically in other regions (Naquin and Rawski 1987; A. Wolf 1989a:248-50), they had productive estates and distributed their income less equally than tributary principle required, in practice if not in ideology. With investments in land, improvements to arable, industrial production, overseas trade, domestic commerce, and moneylending, cliques of leaders in such lineages, backed by the arms of their poorer brethren, were major actors in petty-capitalist undertakings. Where talent or numbers failed, they adopted freely, often in unorthodox fashion, and sometimes allowed uxorilocal marriage, with an in-marrying son-in-law treated as a sort of male daughter-in-law or as a temporary, dismissable concubine (Waltner 1990:89, 100-101).

Small lineages without corporate estates, such as the north China Liu described by Martin Yang (1945:134-41), existed only through a kind of loose self-consciousness, with no accumulative institutions whatsoever. They owned only nonproductive property such as a graveyard or a small trust of land the income from which supported annual sacrifices. Surpluses were consumed in ancestral

feasts, modest welfare benefits, and architectural symbols of unity. The education of boys that lineages sometimes paid for can be seen as a continuum of conspicuous consumption, gambling, and actual investment: boys educated with collective resources may have found official employment or contacts and returned more benefit to the lineage than had been spent on them. Most young talents, however, did not.

Small lineages generally strongly opposed the adoption of outside heirs, which would limit claims on their narrow resource base. Kin practices of other kinds, too, were likely to conform to tributary ideals, such as major marriages with at least some dowry for adult daughters, rather than uxorilocal or minor marriages (Wolf 1989; and this volume, Chapter 7).<sup>3</sup> Their activities seem largely to have been aimed at maintenance and stability rather than at expansion through capitalist-like behavior.

Economic transactions of the smaller lineages generally conformed to the tributary model; those of the large lineages displayed attributes of petty capitalism. The former appear to have been a transparent corollary of Chinese family law; their history, even were it accessible, is unlikely to reveal much more than can be seen from their surface contemporary appearance. The history of the large form shows them to have been primarily political-economic actors using kinship forms acceptable to the state as shields to deflect ruling-class rapacity from petty-capitalist undertakings.

Arthur P. Wolf has discussed variations in lineage scale, corporateness, and recruitment, concluding that one can account for the estate-holding form (together with some other important variations in Chinese kinship) by aligning these variations with long-standing cultural substrates (1989a:260). Although disagreeing with Wolf about the general significance of substrates in the interpretation of Chinese kinship (see Chapter 5), I find that his regionalization of lineages accords well with my expectations based on political economy.

Using regional data collected through field interviews of more than six hundred women sixty and over in 1980, Wolf divided prerevolution Chinese lineages into three categories, which closely resemble those devised by K. Hazelton (1986). Wolf's Type I lineages were similar in their segmentary structure and in having a large membership and substantial corporate property; his Type II lineages had single-surname settlement(s), an ancestral hall, and a common grave site; his Type III lineages jointly worshiped ancestors, possessed a corporate symbol (such as a genealogy or ancestral tablet), and showed social solidarity (1989a:247). To see most clearly the differing effects of tributary and petty-capitalist influences, we can usefully reduce these types to only two — I versus II and III — in which

3. In "major" marriage, in Arthur Wolf's terminology, the bride goes as an adult to begin marital life in her husband's home; in "minor" marriage, she is reared from infancy by her future parents-in-law (A. Wolf 1968).

the most distinguishing feature was the collective ownership — or lack of it — of substantial means of petty-capitalist production. For brevity, I refer to "owner" and "nonowner" lineages, though it is understood that Wolf's Types II and III *did* own collective property in the form of ritual buildings, grave sites, and the pooling of effort and human resources which give material meaning to the term "social solidarity." Such collective property significantly affected standing in the TMP.

Both owner and nonowner lineages also possessed what David Faure calls rights of settlement: When an ancestor made his home at a particular place, "his descendants gain[ed] the rights that were associated with settlement at that place, and through his departure from it, they los[t] these rights." Faure reminds us that these settlement rights were not simply symbolic. They were legal rights in the TMP, giving document holders access to contractual protection (and, less desirably, the obligation to pay taxes). He cites a lineage-foundation legend in which (as in other similar legends) "the documents that were supposed to have been issued by the . . . subprefect and the magistrates who permitted subsequent settlement are quite often included" (1989:11, 12–13, 9). Although lineages sometimes claimed land they had purchased, they universally claimed land their ancestors *had been permitted by officials* to settle. Although all lineages owned settlement rights, only Wolf's Type I lineages used patricorporate property to make reinvestable profit.

Why did institutions so similar in their ideological and legal status differ so radically in how they used their collective means of production? Wolf's answer to this question is, in its general outline, compatible with my own: "Although there were broad regional differences in the relative frequency of the various types of lineages, examples of all types of lineage organization can be found in almost every locality. In other words, the regional differences were statistical rather than normative. People always had the option of developing the more complex forms of lineage organization if they had the desire and could muster the necessary human and material resources" (1989a:258). Faure adds weight to this view by concluding that by the Qing "a common ritual language had developed in relation to lineage practices that was used throughout China and that was not restricted to any particular social class" (1989:8). (Faure habitually uses "class" to refer simply to social strata based on wealth.)

Wolf's approach to lineage formation, based on a large and reliable field sample, fits well with the idea that lineages chose between TMP and PCMP actions. Such choices depended, I believe, on the existence of an active market for the factors of production such as land, labor, products, and money. In active markets, those to whom lineage organization gave even small initial advantages found motivation outside the lineage structure to begin to exploit their kinfolk, treating them less like brothers and more like employees. Without such a market, pressures by relatively prosperous lineage segments to exploit their kin were more

easily held in check by the tributary ideal of equality among agnates. Although such equality was qualified by the hierarchy of age and generation, this was very different from the hierarchy of class.

Lineage estates structured the possibility of inequality among kin into the very foundation of the lineage system. A man whose household had grown rich under his leadership might allocate part of that accumulation as a collectively held estate for his lineal descendants. The rest, certainly including any property he himself had inherited individually from his father, would be divided equally among his sons. The benefits of an ancestral trust, properly managed, persisted through the generations, making it likely that those whose lineage branch was thus endowed would grow richer than those whose ancestors had never created such a sacred trust. This procedure protected accumulated wealth against the lineage's more egalitarian tendencies, and exacerbated class divisions.

Accidental inequalities between households or branches could trigger brief cycles of dominance by one part of a lineage over others, or by a whole lineage over its neighbors. From such inequality in control of means of production might come the extraction of surplus from subordinated populations which could lead to an accumulation spiral. Clearly, however, such imbalances did not lead to accumulation spirals and expanded reproduction at most times and in most places. Only when the capacity of officials to drain off tribute was limited could surpluses begin to be used as capital. The areas in which nonowner lineages were the statistical norm were often poor (as in north China), and poor people were more likely than rich ones to organize themselves into lineages that owned no marketable means of production. Regional poverty, however, may be largely the result of the effectiveness of the TMP at extracting wealth.

Although it is useful to reduce Wolf's three types into two to emphasize the significance of lineages as petty-capitalist patricorporations, retaining the original three types suggests a more fine-grained analysis of regional variation among lineages. Wolf's field data correlate reasonably well with the political-economic regionalization set out in Chapter 4. Wolf's type I, with large corporate property, should be found especially in low TMP/high PCMP regions (such as the south-east coast); type II, with some ancestral property, in high TMP/high PCMP regions (such as the Yangzi Valley); type III, with no marketable means of production, in high TMP/low PCMP regions (such as the North China Plain. (The reader will recall that low TMP/low PCMP regions were culturally marginal, not fully Han in population. Lineages there might be better explained by Burton Pasternak's frontier hypothesis [1969]).

In a discussion of Wolf's findings, Jack Goody (1990:60-61) refers the reader to exemplars of each of Wolf's types, chosen, I believe, because they are excellent ethnographically. These exemplars are not all found in the regions I predict for them here. Some very small present-day north Taiwan lineages studied by Emily

Martin Ahern (1973), for example, are Wolf's type II. Not all lineages in a given region took the predicted form. By examining Wolf's original data, however, I conclude that his lineage types were closely congruent with my three regional outcomes of the interaction of the TMP and the PCMP at high and low levels of strength.

My reinterpretation of Wolf's findings turns on a distinction between the different kinds of things owned by lineages, and between the uses to which they were put, and are put today. Groups of agnatically related men who exercised control over one another's disposition of ancestral property and heirs possessed some common property: they were, by definition, corporate bodies when and if they did this. As has been argued earlier, because the Chinese state supported just such claims, Type III lineages were potentially near-universal. They were likely to fade entirely from view only in areas, or at times, when massive and chaotic population movements disrupted their otherwise almost automatic formation. Type III lineages, found especially in the North China Plain and among the poor everywhere, made small, pragmatic contributions to the welfare of their constituent households, but ultimately contributed most to the smooth extraction of tribute by the state by teaching and enforcing tributary virtues. In such regional economies, drained dry by the state, neither lineages nor individuals accumulated much surplus.

A lineage that went beyond this minimal form — Type II — had a genealogy written, established a graveyard, built a hall, founded a school, perhaps even set aside sufficient land to underwrite lineage ritual. This collective property was valuable, but it was not productive, at least not in the market. These things were use values, not exchange values; they were distributed among members according to the logic of tributary exchange. They brought prestige, they may have assisted lineage members to tap into the tributary system — schools and well-conducted rituals were essential to this entry — but they were not means of production, or anything like capital. Type II lineages took advantage of their prestige but were deflected from investing solely in patricorporate enterprise by the rich possibilities of an active TMP. With ample opportunity for political patronage in such regions as the Yangzi Valley, individuals could shelter their wealth without disguising it as collective property.

By contrast, a Type I lineage, which created new fields, ran a market or pawnshop, made bricks, or bought a salt franchise, had productive corporate "ancestral property" that could be used very much as capital is used. Wolf's type I lineages were possible where petty capitalism was strong and the tributary mode too weak either to control it effectively or to divert its members' energies to the pursuit of wealth in the TMP. Such lineages appeared in Fujian and were founded in Guangzhou during moments of state weakness. They were major political-economic actors, obscuring with kinship rhetoric their capacity to accumulate capital and generate social inequality.

It is the central paradox of petty capitalism (and other versions of petty-commodity production) that capitalist-like relations of production in the wider society may preserve and even create intensely feudal productive relations in the guise of kinship (Collins 1991; Lem 1991). In China, where the TMP insisted that people organize themselves as *jia* and rewarded those who invented and used the lineage, the lineage emerged as one of the most significant institutions in commodity-producing regions.

Perhaps the most universal, and historically oldest, function of lineages since the Song, however, has been their contribution to the reproduction of gender in society. Lineage activities raised maleness to the status of the sacred. Though mothers too were revered as ancestors in Chinese society, it was only through a line of males that the whole body of kin could trace their links to one another and to the apical ancestor upon whose putative existence the structure of the lineage rested. Agnatic ties were honored, celebrated, ritualized; other kinds of kinship, and female roles other than the relation of mother of sons, were essentially ignored by the lineage. In many lineages, women were forbidden even the smallest role in lineage ritual or any share in lineage property. Even a scattering of smallish, propertyless lineages about the countryside made an important ritual statement about the importance of men, and the unimportance of women, in late-imperial society. Core values of the tributary mode regarding gender and other forms of hierarchy were reenacted and reinforced at every lineage ceremony and business meeting.

The most vivid sign of real revolutionary change I have observed in recent fieldwork in rural China was the delight on the faces of two fourteen-year-old Fujian girls who were telling me about their participation in recently reestablished lineage rituals. "People come from everywhere to our lineage hall. There is so much food for everyone, we all get new clothes — it's really wonderful!" one sparkled. "Girls too?" I asked. "Did *you* two get shares?" "Of course — it's our lineage!" came back the innocent reply.



## Dowry and Brideprice

After a few days, I became still more crazy about him . . . and I began to dream what dresses I would ask him to present me and what curtains and what beddings and what furniture I would ask him to buy me, and I would ask . . . [for] that three-roomed house on the north of the southern court, and how I wanted him to furnish it for me, with so many long tables and square tables; and I would ask him to purchase some decorations for the tables and I would ask him to buy me a desk clock for the centre table and another clock for the side wall; and I wanted a gold watch in my jacket, and . . . certainly I could not go without a gold bracelet on my arm.

— A fictional heroine, dreaming of her lover, 1936

If people are very poor, they give their daughters only a suit or two of clothing when they are married. If they are rich, they give them much more than the amount of the betrothal money.

— A Chaozhou woman, born about 1830

It is a truth universally acknowledged that Chinese daughters are the byproducts of attempts to produce Chinese sons.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, I examine the key kinship institutions for those daughters: marriage, along with the exchanges of dowry and brideprice that sealed it. I view institutions from the by-now-familiar double construct of unavoidable TMP constraints and their PCMP subversion.

Marriage was the principal means through which female workers and reproducers were recruited as permanent members of, and workers in, *jia*. In mar-

1. This does not mean, of course, that Chinese daughters were never loved. The heartbreak of a Chinese father on the death of his toddler daughter, expressed in a lament he wrote in 1619, is additionally poignant, however, because his emotions seemed to him disproportionate — she was, after all, only a very little girl (Ayscough 1938:8–13). We know, too, that women sometimes prayed for daughters (Gray 1875:453).

riage as a mechanism for shaping *jia*, the cultural text is perfectly transparent. Marriage was a contract, its conditions written on paper, legally dissoluble only by a court (at least of customary elders), with its central economic features either written down or clearly recognized in custom. Insofar as law mattered, a Chinese marriage could not be formalized without a written document. In the words of M. Huc, traveling in 1846, "When the Chinese contracts a lawful marriage, he is perfectly aware that he is forming an indissoluble tie, and the written laws of the Empire are in harmony with the general conviction. They impose severe punishments on married persons who openly neglect their duties" (1970, 2:227).

Marriage transferred a woman from dependency on her parents to dependency on her parents-in-law and, when he attained his majority through their deaths, on her husband. Her reproductive and economic duties were thence to them, though certain other rights and duties continued to bind her to her own parents.

The ideology governing relations among male agnates was necessarily structurally compatible with men's inheriting and using ancestral property on the basis of their differing kinship positions. The rules governing women's kinship behavior operated very differently. Women had no right to inherit means of production, although sometimes women of wealthy families were given the use of such property in dowry as special marks of favor (see R. Watson 1984:2, 8). Women were temporary members of their natal patricorporations and tenuous members of those into which they married. They were moved from one *jia* to another like wrapped packages, veiled and sealed in a carrying chair to symbolize their transfer (Waltner 1990:103), after extended negotiations about what goods would accompany them or be given in return for them. Qing law made economic exchanges necessary to a formal marriage, though it did not specify the nature of the goods to be exchanged. Avoiding the devolution of agnatic property to daughters automatically enmeshed them in exchange relations as their only means to a livelihood under the TMP.

Relations among affines, and those between a woman herself and her natal and marital families, were thus more vulnerable to transformation into market transactions than were those among men linked by common property claims. Formal, legal rules for marriages existed, appended to those that governed agnatic relations, but marriage practice in fact easily slid into something a little like, more like, or completely like the negative reciprocity of the market.

#### MAJOR MARRIAGE WITH DOWRY (MMD)

In arranging their daughters' adult careers, Chinese commoners could choose among many forms of marriage, as Arthur Wolf and Huang Chieh-shan have shown (1980). They identify major marriage as a culturally superior form in which the bride had reached the age of majority, had reached menarche, and in

which affinal relationships had been established. This form was drawn from legal requirements that structured not only elite marriages but also marriages of peasants leading uncommoditized lives in subsistence regions. It assumed no role for a woman beyond the production of use values for a husband's household and envisioned her primarily as a reproducer for a husband's family. In her natal family, she was "spilled water," a cost to her parents for no return beyond the limited housework she would do before she married. If a woman was primarily a reproducer and housewife, not a potential source of ancestral property through land transfers or money earnings, a daughter would be reared to adulthood because she was useless to another family until then. She had to be married out, and promptly after puberty, as otherwise she might have borne children who could rob the true owners of their resources.

Never a co-owner of her natal *jia*'s means of production (Shiga 1978:110), a daughter nevertheless had customary protections, derived from the ideology that supported an uncommoditized, tributary, political economy. The most fundamental of the daughter's protections was her right to be married and thus to come eventually to membership as a mother in another patricorporation. Even a little slave was sold with the understanding that she would be married off at a reasonable age to an appropriate man by her own parents or new guardian/parent/owner. In the 1930s a father disposing of a baby girl by setting her afloat in a river near Jiaomei, Fujian, included her astrological "eight characters," necessary for proper matchmaking (A. Wolf 1980 fieldnotes). A young woman would, if possible, marry into a family of equal or slightly better condition than her own, to prevent stress in an already delicate relationship between the two households and to assure reasonable treatment for her. Elaborate horoscopy, go-betweens, and gossip grapevines assured this outcome. Once married, she had the right to be secure from divorce without cause. "Eternal life through sacrifice is guaranteed to a woman through marriage," according to Shiga (1978:127).

Another important protection for daughters was the dowry of consumables, especially the furniture, bedding, and clothing she would need in her new home. Although marriage was legally contracted by the bride's family's acceptance of betrothal gifts from the groom's family, a bride was given dignity by contributions from her birth family to her husband's. The flavor of the exchange appears in an account of a wealthy Macao bride in the late nineteenth century. Her family having inadvertently omitted the firewood to cook her husband's first meals which the dowry should have included, the bride haughtily boiled his rice by burning two rolls of silk, refusing her mother-in-law's good-natured offer of fuel. Her father, extremely pleased that she had so dramatically saved his reputation, then sent one hundred coolies with firewood to his daughter's new home, more than the house could hold (Menpes 1909:17). Without her dowry, a bride ran the risk of being told she came as a beggar, stealing resources for her

own upkeep from a husband's family. That family had only a very ambiguous responsibility for her until she bore them children and thus earned some economic rights in their patricorporation, of which she initially was only a potential member (e.g. Sa 1985:292). A bride arriving without a dowry might not have the wherewithal to live comfortably in a household where anything she was given might legitimately be grudged a nonagnate. A detail in the customs surrounding the delayed transfer marriage, in which the "bride-daughter" is married but still lives apart from her husband and parents-in-law, is revealing. In the 1920s, one such bride, retaining the independence her earnings gave her, refused, on her brief visits to her mother-in-law's house, to eat or drink anything provided there. She brought all necessary provisions for herself (Stockard 1989:19). Until she began to fulfill her sexual duties, to eat her parents-in-law's food was inappropriate in tributary terms. Her refusal was a powerful ritual statement in her petty-capitalist-inspired negotiations with them over her labor power. Throughout China, without a dowry, a bride brought only her body, which, until it had done its reproductive job, had uncertain value. The simple dowry of consumables which many brides received conveyed an extremely mixed message about a woman's worth.

Marriage ceremonies were to be carried out with some at least of the customary symbolism, public display of the bride and her dowry, and socially validating feasts. Although tributary logic encouraged parents to provide a dowry, when they did not do so the daughter was not wronged. Dowry was a gift, not a right or an inheritance (Graham 1961:129; McCreery 1976:164; Shiga 1978:118, 147), and it almost never contained means of production, which rightfully belonged to men. If a dowry was not given, she had no legal case — unlike a disinherited son — although she might complain loudly about its lack or limitations in bridal laments (Xie Zhimin 1991, 2:774-79). Her likelihood of receiving dowry varied readily according to outside pressures, including the local level of commoditization of the economy.

What I label "major marriage with dowry" — MMD — was universally known and widely practiced in China. It was the sanctioned form of the scholar-official class, and a prestigious and frequent alternative among Chinese everywhere. It was the form most compatible with the tributary principle that each person's rights in the political economy were determined by social status. It allows as well for the affection for daughters that receives little recognition in Confucian allocations of household resources. Most studies of Chinese kinship take MMD to be Chinese marriage.

But it was not. Under the influence of petty-capitalist possibilities for the commoditization of women and their work, many tributary rights of women were abrogated, and other patterns of marital relationship emerged. The permanence of marriage was seriously undermined when a woman did not bear children, for example. In strongly petty-capitalist regions, many childless

women were repudiated by their husbands' families. In north Taiwan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, of childless women married in the major fashion, 20 percent were divorced by the end of fourteen years of marriage, and 23 percent after twenty-five years. For women married out in the minor fashion — that is, in infancy or childhood — 47 percent were divorced after fourteen years of marriage, and 56 percent after twenty-five years. In this region, even the production of children did not gain a woman a secure place in her marital family. A north Taiwan woman who had borne two children by her twenty-fifth year of marriage had a cumulative probability of divorce of nearly 10 percent for major marriages, and nearly 20 percent for minor marriages (A. Wolf 1995: chap. 8).

This same region gives us evidence for how parents ignored the tributary ideal that girls should be married after menarche, as young adults, because parents were responsible for rearing them in childhood. Like dowry, brideprice, and the form of marriage, the woman's age at marriage might also be negotiated, rather than being fixed at early adulthood as TMP logic would require. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the great majority of girls in one Taiwan region were married out in infancy to live with in-laws (Wolf and Huang 1980:233).

Age at marriage (or disposal) was especially sensitive to calculations of how much it would cost to rear a girl if she was seen as simply a consumer in the household, and of the opportunity costs of marrying her too early if the local labor market enabled her to earn income for the household. Women in the highly commoditized countryside near Shaoxing, Zhejiang, were "bride-priced" at so many *yuan per sui* (year) of their age at engagement; the cost varied from 4 to 10 *yuan per sui*. In northern Fujian in the early twentieth century, slave girls were sold at rates varying with the price of rice, and valued by age (Darley 1917:62-63). A Jiangsu woman who eloped in the 1980s was told by her father that "if she did not return home, she would have to pay her family a lump sum of fifteen *yuan* for each month of the eighteen years she had lived with them" (Honig and Hershatter 1988:287). In Shandong, where women's labor had little cash value, brideprices suffered marked decline after women passed their early twenties, however; in the absence of suitable income-producing work, these women's only value lay in their probable fertility (A. Wolf 1980 fieldnotes).

The TMP preference for "matching doors," or economically equal households, for a marital pair was also readily ignored — to the detriment of women — where girls were highly commoditized. I have encountered several old Taiwanese women from rich families who had been married off as infants to a carpenter, a small farmer, and a wetnurse's household. In early-twentieth-century north Taiwan, where the TMP played so minimal a role, wealth gave sufficient prestige; one did not need to waste money rearing and dowering daughters.

Under petty-capitalist influence, marriage forms became extremely variable, sometimes as historically fleeting phenomena, sometimes as enduring patterns. Many women in late-imperial China were married in ways that deviated significantly from MMD, often in economic circumstances that allowed for some parental choice. Although the customary major-marriage symbolism of bridal clothing, sedan chairs, and so forth may well have been provided, the financial transactions that lay behind them were more varied than appearances implied. Some families sold a daughter outright or married her in childhood, or provided little or no dowry out of their own resources, or brought the son-in-law to live with them in the uxorilocal form. MMD stood in opposition not to a single non-major category but to a wide range of marriage practices found in many parts of China. Major marriage takes two forms, or combinations of them, with nearly opposite economic consequences for the two households: the dowry form and the brideprice form. Let us label the latter MMB.

In MMD the bride's family expends its own resources on the dowry. Tainan people, who still give large dowries, say that "marrying out a daughter is like having your house robbed." In MMB, by contrast, most or all of the marriage expenses are borne by the groom's family. The bride's family may keep part or all of the brideprice; if there is a trousseau of clothing and household goods, it is all or largely purchased with funds supplied by the groom's family. Although such marriages are solemnized in rituals essentially identical to those of MMD, the material consequences for bride, groom, and their households are markedly different. A classical MMD marriage is costly for the bride's parents. They may supply the bride's trousseau and all the household goods for the new couple, or may add substantially to what the groom's family will give them. In MMD, the bride's parents are not compensated for their expenditure on dowry, and the cost to the groom's family is less.

MMB, in which the trousseau is all or largely paid for by the groom's family, is more common than MMD, now as in the past. Demands for large gifts by the bride's side, even though all these gifts usually return with the bride to her husband's home, may plunge the husband, his household, and thus the bride herself into a morass of debt, for the repayment of which the bride is now also liable (Honig and Hershatter 1988:149). One may say — and sometimes Chinese people do say — that MMB is much like selling a daughter or buying a daughter-in-law.

MMD and MMB can also be described as the marriage forms associated with direct and indirect dowry, which I discuss in the next section. Between these extremes lies a more-or-less-balanced exchange in which both sides contribute to the dowry the bride brings her to her husband's home. Sometimes a woman's parents explicitly match the brideprice with an equal sum.

Wolf and Huang have drawn attention to two other marriage variants in north Taiwan between 1845 and 1945 (1980). One of these was uxorilocal marriage, in which a son-in-law entered an heirless household, agreed that his children (or some of them) would bear his wife's father's surname, and might even take the name himself. Uxorilocal marriage was widely known in China as a crisis strategy for sonless households and propertyless men. As an obvious solution to serious domestic difficulties, it was relatively common in some regions, reaching almost 40 percent of all marriages, for example, in parts of southern Taiwan early in this century (Pasternak 1985b:315). In regions where the PCMP was weak, uxorilocality was sharply restricted by agnates of the potential bride's father, who refused permission for unrelated men to lay claim through marriage to property over which they had residual claims. The position of a wife in such a marriage was markedly different from that of a woman married in major fashion. She had the power, with the agreement of her parents, to push out the husband after he has fulfilled his reproductive function. Where it is permitted at all, uxorilocal marriage reveals a set of implicit understandings quite different from those of the TMP — that property relations, not generation and gender, determine the distribution of power in Chinese families; that agnatic principle is in fact negotiable for a family with the property to attract a son-in-law; that wife/husband and in-law relationships are reversed when women are the links to property.

The second of Wolf and Huang's marriage variants was "minor marriage." In north Taiwan, a region of explosive nineteenth-century commoditization in which labor-intensive tea growing played a large part, 74 percent of girl babies were adopted out shortly after birth to be raised as daughters-in-law in their future husbands' households (1980:233), and 80 percent actually entered such marriages (196). Wealthy families as well as poor, landlords along with laborers arranged such marriages for their sons (263–65; Sa 1985). Minor marriage was a normative, socially acceptable alternative to major, the latter often only a household's second choice when attempts at arranging a minor marriage failed. Minor marriage was a form common as well in many parts of the China mainland, sometimes as the despised last resort of the impoverished, but sometimes culturally well accepted (Wolf and Huang 1980:255, 2–8). Minor marriage carried parental authority to a hypertrophied extreme at the expense of young people, especially girls. It expanded with the sudden growth of demand for young labor during the nineteenth-century tea and camphor boom and rapidly contracted as Japanese rule altered the local political economy. The coincidence suggests that parents were highly responsive to market conditions, using their power to override major-marriage protections for women.

Another Chinese marriage variant became for a time a fully accepted regional pattern, practiced by rich and poor alike (Gray 1878, 1:207–8; Topley 1975; Sankar 1978; Jaschok 1984; Stockard 1989). It was glimpsed by the perceptive M. Huc in

the silk and cotton districts, where daughters were allowed to live with their natal families, and parents were "even unwilling to see them marry and enter another family" (1970, 2:347-48).

This form, which Janice Stockard has called "delayed transfer marriage" is best known as it existed in the silk-growing Canton or Pearl River delta. Young women, their hands not yet roughened by the harsh domestic tasks of wives, which included cutting silkworm fodder, earned good wages reeling silk in late-nineteenth-century Guangzhou. With the encouragement of peers and parents, the reluctant agreement of parents-in-law, and the no doubt increasingly surly tolerance of their husbands, silk reelers married in major fashion and promptly returned to their parents' bed and board. By various stratagems, they evaded sexual intercourse and pregnancy for up to six years before transferring to their marital homes and bearing children. Some women refused transfer altogether, purchasing substitutes to meet their childbearing obligations and thus ensuring them ancestral status. As with Taiwanese minor marriages, we see that marriage forms were most negotiable where the PCMP was strong.

#### MARRIAGE AS SALE

In the nineteenth century Arthur H. Smith wrote that "there are regions in northern China where the money extracted from the family of the future bridegroom is so considerable, that what remains after the real bridal outfit has been purchased is a positive source of profit to the fathers" (1899:270-71). This comment, by a man extremely familiar with Chinese life, and describing an area where women were more protected against market manipulation in normal times than in most of China, must be attended to. Yet the most contentious issue to confront the analyst of Chinese marriage is the question of whether "marriage" was ever the same as "sale" in that society. Following the arguments developed for the understanding of marriage exchanges in many African societies, Jack Goody has consistently denied that this is so (1973, 1990:30). Other anthropologists who draw primarily on examples from nonmarket societies also deny that the giving of brideprice for a woman constitutes a sale. Conrad Kottak thinks "the term 'brideprice' is unfortunate, since it suggests that the wife is being sold. In most [African] societies with bridewealth institutions, people do not regard the transfer of such wealth as a sale. Certainly they do not think of marriage as a relationship between a man and an object that can be bought and sold" (1974: 134); while Marvin Harris has commented that, for African societies, "the exchange of women is not equivalent to the selling and buying of automobiles or refrigerators in Euro-American price-market societies. The wife receivers do not own their woman in any total sense; they must take good care of her or her brothers and 'fathers' will demand that she be returned to them" (1971:279-80). Goody makes similar arguments, which are fur-

ther complicated by discussion of the effects of dowry and prestige (see also Harrell and Dickey 1985). These are, of course, relevant to marriage perceived in a tributary context, but they do not preclude the commoditization of marriage in the Chinese case.

Chinese people freely use the terms "buy" and "sell" in reference to marriage arrangements, and not as metaphors. In the very recent past, women seem to have been owned in something very close to "a total sense." The only universally recognized legal and customary right men retained over a married female agnate was the posthumous protest of her suicide or early death due to mistreatment. Fathers and brothers certainly did not demand the return of ill-treated daughters and sisters,<sup>2</sup> or offer them significant protection during life. As Maurice Freedman has remarked, "there is a general lack of definition in Chinese society of the norms governing relations between . . . a married woman and her agnates" (1979:271). And China, unlike the African examples on which Goody and Kottak rely, was a "price-market society" in which, as studies of slavery and adoption clearly demonstrate, there was and is a well-developed market for the sale of persons (Gates 1995).

Even a bought person remains a person, with some rights and capacities that no nonhuman creature or object has; women are not, and have not been, pure commodities in Chinese society. But in everyday speech and to a very great degree in common fact, women could be "bought" and "sold," with even adult marriages requiring money transactions. Under petty-capitalist (or capitalist) conditions, the money that symbolized female reproductivity could become a price, and woman a purchase. From the point of view of the girl's patricorporation, a daughter sold had been disposed of so that she was no longer a drain on its resources and indeed added to them through her purchase price. Her position — and theirs — was not as grand as if she had been married for a brideprice, but then this marriage, in turn, was not as honorable as marriage with dowry. There were choices.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, evidence abounds that sale was one end of a continuum of transactions in women. I note R. F. Johnston's cheerful description of men in Weihaiwei who had a friend buy them brides in Beijing (1910:211-13); Gray's account of recalcitrant nuns officially sold to men who otherwise could not afford wives (1875:586; see also 567); Robert Coltman's detailed account of a "just judge" in Qinan who in the early 1870s closed all the local houses of prostitution, arrested the prostitutes, and sold them by weight at the day's market price per catty of pork to unmarried farmers as wives (1891:116-18). A Sichuan father wanted to betroth his daughter "where they

2. It is always a pleasure to find exceptions to such harsh generalizations. I learned recently of a family in 1920s Sichuan who retrieved their married daughter from a mother-in-law who bound the woman's waist to keep her from eating heartily.

could get the most money," but conveniently died, leaving the transaction to her kinder-hearted brothers, who said, "Let our sister be happy, even if the money is less" (Mrs. A. Little [1898]:101).<sup>3</sup> Another Sichuan resident, considering buying a wife from his home province, "discussed the matter in very businesslike style with [Mrs. Little's] husband. 'I can get a wife in Szechuan for ten dollars,' he said. 'But, then, I can know nothing about her family and habits, as I could if I took a wife from Hupeh. . . . It is true there I should have to pay more. . . . Now, if I find after marriage that the woman I have chosen smokes opium, there will be my ten dollars gone, and nothing to show for them'" (Little [1898]:129). In Shandong, "the plain-speaking peasants . . . will talk of buying and selling their wives and daughters in much the same way as they would talk of dealing in farm produce at the neighbouring market" (Johnston 1910:208). Sale of women to other men to be wives was a Qing-code punishment for adulterous women, the purchase price going to the state (Staunton 1810:307, 404). Little girls adopted (or "sold") into minor marriage in northern Taiwan, for example, often were resold to other men as brides when the needs of their fostering families changed (Wolf and Huang 1980:114-15). One of the most common metaphors in rural Taiwan for marriage is the "pig taken to market" — and pigs were the market animal par excellence, raised as one of an ordinary family's sole annual sources of cash.<sup>4</sup>

Taiwan has offered me many opportunities to discuss marriage by purchase with participants in and observers of such a system. When the Guomintang brought nearly two million people, mostly men without families, to Taiwan between 1945 and 1950, the six million native Taiwanese were under severe economic pressure to provide some of them with brides. Many parents succumbed to this pressure in the first decades of Guomintang rule. While most women married in such a way are embarrassed to admit having been sold, some are angrily or tearfully forthright about it. "Father sold me to him and gave me nothing out of the brideprice: not a dress, not a storage chest, not a coin. It was as though I were a pig in the market," said one woman bitterly. Other Taiwanese women who were married to Mainlander men in those years hasten to specify that theirs was *not* a "buy/sell" marriage. In the late 1960s in working-class Taipei neighborhoods, people used the word "to buy" as a near synonym for the term for a man marrying, and it is still much used today by people with no pretensions. Even when local women married other Taiwanese, the husband's money gift to the bride's family outweighed whatever money and goods might return to him with the bride. In north Taiwan, unlike the dowry-heavy south, it was assumed that getting a daughter-in-law was costly, and disposing of a daughter might bring in a little something.

3. Brothers, unlike fathers, had to have a woman's consent to marry her off (Commeaux 1970:188). Let us believe that the quoted brothers were simply rather nice.

4. I thank Arthur Wolf for referring me to this bucolic trope.

In some parts of China "marriage by capture" was a variant in which parties to the arrangement sought to avoid customary costs. It sometimes involved direct sale, although it often occurred after secret negotiations between the couple's kin seniors. A party of the groom's relatives ambushed the bride-elect and carried her off. That this move forestalled protests by the bride is a rare hint that an assertive daughter might indeed have had a say in her own disposition — and saved the cost of dowry for the bride's family, as in an example from Zhejiang. Or the capture might simply have been an abduction, not agreed to by the bride's family, but accomplished by the groom's to avoid the payment of brideprice (A. Wolf 1980). Instead of sale, we see robbery compounded with rape. The existence of local terms for these practices (including those in Sichuan, according to my informants) indicates that they were well known.

Hsu Chang-ming examined marriage transactions as recorded by reforming Chinese Communist party cadres in the Shaan-Gan-Ning Border Area in 1946, where the local sex ratio was 135 males to 100 females. She distinguished between outright sales of women and an exchange pattern in which the groom's family's presents were not counterbalanced by an equivalent dowry and excluded cases of pure sale. She then described cases of brideprice-only exchange as follows:

In 1939, a rich peasant could buy his son a wife for 64 yuan, which was more than a year's income for a shepherd (about 45 yuan). Two years later, the cost of a bride reached 50 to 200 yuan, and by 1942, 1000 to 8000 yuan. The fact that a correlation existed between the bride's price and her ability to work could be seen in the differing sums attained in 1942, a year in which a seven year old girl could be bought for as little as 700 yuan, while a girl in her teens fetched twice that amount, and a widow could be purchased for 3000 yuan. (1984:15)<sup>5</sup>

Gradations in marriage exchanges make Chinese marriage especially difficult to conceptualize as a single class of event. Attempts to define it for legal purposes, as in the setting up of law codes for an independent Singapore, proved difficult and frustrating for such an expert as Freedman (1950:98-112; 1979), especially in regard to the question of bought wives. In 1948, a Hong Kong's Governor's Committee Report observed, "There has probably been more controversy about the exact relationship and position of the tsip [purchased, secondary wife — H.G.] and the way such relationship may be constituted than there has been about any other sphere of Chinese law and custom (1953:22). Although some tsip were "from a very much lower social stratum than the tsai [primary wife — H.G.], . . . treated like a handmaiden and . . . subject to commands . . . of the husband's mother," some "came from approximately the same social class . . . [and thus]

5. For lists of girl children simply sold into slavery in early-twentieth-century Guangzhou, see Jaschok 1988:145-46.

could more readily enforce her rights." Basing its conclusions on Chinese cultural expectations, the report stated that a *tsip* "is in law considered a wife, a secondary or inferior wife it is true, . . . but nevertheless a wife and not a kept mistress" and that her children are legitimate. Many women who were not polygynously married became daughters-in-law and mothers of legitimate children and thus, presumably, wives, after being taken with "no ceremony . . . required at all," such unions being "purely a matter of bargain and sale" (1953:23, 24, 25, 22).

Maria Jaschok's poignant histories of Guangdong-area *mooi-jai* (female bondslaves) living under the most extreme petty-capitalist conditions show purchased slaves bearing their master's children, and sometimes being made *tsip*, at his whim (1988:38-39, 57, 95). Robert Shaw's interviews with women who had been bondservant-wives in prerevolution Xiamen reiterate these points in all their human tragedy (1994). The "real" status of bought "servant/daughters" has created much conceptual difficulty for outsiders attempting to make sharp (and inappropriate) distinctions between women as kin and women as property. A *mooi-jai* might be incorporated into a household as an inferior sort of daughter, or simply used until it was convenient to resell her at a profit (Jaschok 1988:76, 83-84, 99, 125n. 33). Much the same could be said for Taiwanese baby daughters-in-law (*simpua*), slave girls (*cabokan*) (Wolf and Huang 1980:114-17), or, indeed, for any girl child. As Jaschok says, "Options for making profit out of daughters were manifold" (1988:7). Petty-capitalist mentality and practicality were absorbed even by women themselves. Jaschok describes a young woman in desperate poverty absolutely insisting that her father sell her to give him the cash to start a new life, while at the same time giving her the easier existence as a house servant with regular meals (54). The sliding scale of negotiations on which their lives were measured show us the range of marital possibilities for women, from the misery of slavery or prostitution through various versions of marriage to the self-respect of the rare self-supporting delayed-transfer bride-daughters.

Can we draw sharp lines between the marriages of the formally clad, dowered bride in her sedan chair "going to her mother-in-law," the bought maidservant, resold to a suitable workingman after her years of service, and the girl sold from Henan to Shanxi by her famine-stricken parents? Can we, with such lines, exclude the sale of women from an analysis of marriage? I think not. For this analysis, it is not necessary to depend on the "exceptional," if not unusual, cases of daughters sold in times of disaster, for boys too were sold at such times, though more reluctantly, less often, and for higher prices. I examine the ordinary choices of more ordinary times, when parents might have seen daughters either as inferior but "real" family members entitled to childhood care and a suitable marital sendoff, or as the patricorporation's negotiable assets. In making these choices, Chinese people often were guided by two contradictory models of good behavior. That one was a little better than the other was accepted; each followed a different economic logic to a different conclusion.

There was no single PCMP model of marriage. Petty capitalism generated variety in marriage forms, which are the most easily recovered evidence for differing uses of young people's labor. In several of the forms discussed above, the logic of the market is clearly apparent. Observing Chinese kinship from a gendered political-economic perspective suggests that such variation derived from engagement in market/contractual relations rather than in tributary/inheritance relations. Where petty capitalism was especially strong, we should expect to see women's labor and persons treated differently and to find ramifications of this difference affecting regional kinship customs. We also expect to see considerable effort by the state to constrain such variation away from full independence by women and young men. These efforts should have succeeded best where markets did not flourish, or where they did, but were overshadowed by abundant flows of tributary resources, as in capital cities and other regions of high government spending.

As research on women in China continues, we may expect to see more marriage variants, and these should conform to the arguments made here. I should be surprised to learn, for example, of a region of China where neolocal residence with last son as sole heir was the norm, but not of an exaggeration of delayed transfer marriage where a substantial period of bride service preceded an eventual patrivirilocal residence pattern. The former could not stand against legal claims made by elder brothers; the latter would be a matter of how long the groom's family could afford to do without his services under a given male-female labor market.

#### DOWRY AND BRIDEPRICE

Eleanor Leacock contrasts societies in which "women move back and forth as valued people creating, recreating, and cementing networks of reciprocal relations through their moves, which are recompensed for with bride price" with those "in which a woman's role is primarily to provide household services for her husband and his family, and in which bride price takes the form of purchase rather than exchange. . . . A further difference appears when the flow of significant wealth reverses and marriage calls for dowry rather than bride price" (1977:258-59). Less striking than variation in marriage forms, but also puzzling, is the variation observed across China in the giving of dowry and of brideprice. In the complex connection between these fundamentally contradictory marital exchanges lies the clearest expression of a model of kinship behavior in which persons — especially women — seem to become commodities.

An important and well-known discussion of the brideprice/dowry conundrum is to be found in 1973 essays by Jack Goody and Stanley Tambiah. In 1990, Goody returns to this theme. His new section on China, while much expanded in

scope and replete with insights into the Chinese system in comparative perspective, depends ultimately on his earlier arguments about the nature of dowry and brideprice.

In their 1973 essays, Goody and Tambiah agree that what they prefer to call bridewealth and dowry are not opposites or mirror images. They are mechanisms for the transfer of wealth which have different implications both for those immediately involved and for wider social relations. By emphasizing examples of non-state African societies in his discussion of bridewealth, Goody stresses the egalitarian and redistributive functions of the transfer: "Bridewealth passes from the kin of the groom to those of the bride; it forms a societal fund, a circulating pool of resources, the movement of which corresponds to the movement of rights over spouses, usually women" (17). Bridewealth commonly takes the form of "a distinct set of objects which circulate in their own cycle" (18), such as cattle. For his arguments on bridewealth to make sense, the goods given must indeed have restricted circulation, usable only for such transactions.

In China, however, brideprice is frequently paid in that most flexible of exchange media, money. Money does not flow only in circuits of spouse exchange. It can be, and is, used for anything: spent to educate the husband's brothers, put into land, paid out as a debt, used as capital to start a business. Women in contemporary Taipei and Chengdu have mentioned all these as uses to which their brideprices have been put.

Tambiah recognizes that in south Asian societies bridewealth sometimes has "a distinct flavour of 'purchasing' women," and he discusses other salelike marriage transactions that increase among categories of people deeply involved in the commodity economy (1973:64, 62-63, 70). China resembles India in this respect. In neither is the term *brideprice* inappropriate, nor does its operation conduce to egalitarian relations and circulating social funds. Dowry, common in south Asia, has the societal effect of concentrating wealth and widening the gap between rich and poor (Goody and Tambiah 1973:19, 64-65).

Goody and Tambiah also see dowry as a part of a women's property complex in which resources come to rest in the hands of the bride, usually under the control of her husband, as the nucleus of a separate conjugal fund within the wider kin group (J. Goody 1973:17, 1990; Tambiah 1973:63). Goody specifically analyzes Chinese marriage as an example of diverging devolution in which resources from both sets of parents become the economic support of new couples (1990:36). Emphasizing intergenerational transfer, Goody and Tambiah merge the resources given to a bride by her parents — dowry proper — and resources given to the bride by her new parents-in-law (or husband) *via* her parents — the so-called indirect dowry. This concept of gift giving very nearly erases the question of which kin group gains materially, and which loses. The question, however, is central to an understanding of how women are viewed both culturally and analytically.

Goody and Tambiah argue that dowry — direct and indirect together — is a form of premortem inheritance (J. Goody 1973:1, 17; Tambiah 1973:64). But only dowry proper can be considered to be a woman's inheritance and hence a part of a woman's property complex; resources given by the groom's kin (indirect dowry) cannot. A woman whose husband's brideprice has bought her dowry stands on very different ground in his family from one who has brought her own, at no cost to them. Also, dowries rarely contain the fundamental productive wealth — means of production — except for money in the form of gold jewelry (R. Watson 1984:8); dowries are primarily made up of consumables. In the Chinese case, the idea of dowry as inheritance for women is difficult to support.

Tambiah cites Maurice Freedman to the effect that "in China both brideprice and dowry occur together: a brideprice is received for a woman who also takes a dowry . . . with her . . . *some or all of which may have been paid for out of the brideprice received for her*" (71-72). Goody, in both his 1973 and 1990 studies, makes the conflation of dowry and brideprice the key to his analysis and gives the impression that Chinese "dowries" are usually of the indirect sort. Reality is both more flexible and more interesting. Marriage exchanges in China exhibit more, and more regular variation than Goody's argument can account for. His efforts at disentangling China's enormous class and regional variability in these matters do little to clarify matters.<sup>6</sup>

6. Goody deals with the hierarchical and the regional variations. He begins with the assumption that "for pre-industrial times, the differences in the Asian and the European structures and organisation of marriage and the family fell within a specific range of variation that is generally consistent with their roughly similar forms of productive activity based on Bronze Age developments" (1990:1). Put differently, the Chinese social formation (like the European and Indian, but unlike the African) was organized by a tributary mode of production. Drawing on Maurice Freedman, but avoiding his fundamentally materialist use of "class," Goody recognizes the significance of social hierarchy, but in the most neutral way possible. Throughout his analysis of China, people and groups are described sometimes as "strata" (e.g. 101), but usually as "upper" and "lower" people, groups, and lineages that manifest "high" and "low" "trends" (98, 104). These spatial metaphors, utterly without theoretical content, are all Goody offers to link marriage and family variations to the political economy that differentiates Chinese from Africans.

Regional variation is hardly better served. Goody relies heavily on a grand distinction between north and south China, and offers an evasive explanation: "What is it that tends to make upper groups generally more like the North and lower groups more like the South? The practices prevalent in the North and among upper groups are closer to Confucian norms, that is, closer to those of the original core of Han culture, Confucian and neo-Confucian, of the more recent centres in the South, and closer to the norms contained in the written (Confucian) works which formed the basis of schooling for those who were privileged to attend. This distribution is understandable since the North is the original home of Han society, but of course the great cities, and even the smaller towns, any centres of literate culture were also centres of Han culture and of Confucian learning, whether in the South or in the North. And it was of course the upper groups in the South . . . who were more likely to follow the patterns of the North whereas the lower groups were attached to local ways of

Such variability may in some sense be regional, but it is temporal as well, with marriage customs altering rapidly when changing political-economic environments shift the pressures. Rita Gallin describes the Xinxing villagers of Taiwan, whom she has observed over several decades. In the late 1950s,

the cost of the dowry was supplied by the groom's family who provided a brideprice which was, in turn, used to purchase the dowry. Although some families might augment the brideprice by buying a larger dowry than covered by the money received, most did not. Some families even sent a dowry that was smaller in value than the brideprice received (B. Gallin 1966:208). . . . In the 1970s, however, the cost of a dowry weighed much more heavily on the bride's family than the groom's. As one woman said, "Today people not only do not keep the brideprice, but they add things to the bride's dowry." (R. Gallin and B. Gallin 1987:27n.4, 7)

From MMD through MMB to simple sale are two ends and a middle point of a spectrum of marriage exchanges that are the logical outcomes of the influence of commoditization working within TMP constraints. Local marriage customs locatable at some point along this spectrum are outcomes of the interaction of choices to act according to one or the other of the two modes of production. In regions experiencing rapid change in the previously existing balance between the two modes, negotiations within and between households may well follow no fixed "traditional" pattern but produce many options. Special local circumstances affecting this range of possibilities have generated minor and delayed transfer marriage and perhaps others as well, as yet unstudied. MMD is the ruling-class model, and any household using it may always safely claim high status. Locally, however, the advantages to be gained from making petty-capitalist marriage choices may outweigh the worth of that claim. Except among officials' households, class is not the factor that explains the existence and distribution of Chinese marriage variants; local articulation of two modes of production is.

doing things. Part of the convergence was, I have argued, due to similar socio-economic conditions, part due to the advent of immigrants and the power and prestige of the colonisers. But a major part was due to the influence of the state and Confucian ideology mediated by the educational system" (109-10). Goody hardly mentions the role of the state; "socio-economic conditions" are usually "wealth" or "poverty," occasionally "rural" or "urban." The class link to the economy is denatured out of existence. In his insistence on avoiding the "crude reduction to market activities favoured by some economists and anthropologists" (129), he abandons the influence both of market and nonmarket modes of production on family and marriage in favor of an ideology that some people could afford, while others could not. Goody thus leaves readers unversed in Chinese data with a misleading impression of uniformity by brushing aside (as politically incorrect?) abundant evidence for the market-like nature of many Chinese marriage exchanges.

How are these variants distributed? Although the available data are inadequate, it is possible to demonstrate a congruence between patterns of marriage exchanges and different combinations of the two modes of production. To illustrate these patterns, I draw on three sets of data: my own, collected in 1986 and 1988 from two hundred small-business women in Taipei and Chengdu; notes on several hundred interviews on kinship with older rural/suburban women in seven Chinese locales in 1980-81 (the notes were generously lent to me by Arthur P. Wolf); and the information on wedding expenses from J. Lossing Buck's China-wide surveys of 1929-33. Wolf's data (taken from women who in 1980-81 were over fifty-nine years of age), and Buck's represent mainland China during the 1930s and earlier. My own range from as early as that time until the present.

We may better understand the distribution of marriage exchanges by beginning with a comparison between Chengdu marriages, where prerevolution custom and recent experience have made tributary relations particularly salient, and those of Taipei, where booming markets have long made marriage highly negotiable. I begin by contrasting a sketch of prerevolution and current Chengdu marriages with my much fuller knowledge of marriage transactions in Taipei over the same period.

Prerevolution Chengdu gifts from grooms' families to brides' were mostly immediately consumable luxury foods — notably pork and candy, along with clothing and small gifts of jewelry to brides. When money brideprice was given in Chengdu, money returned in dowry was often more or less than the brideprice, in about equal proportion. Dowry was mostly made up of household furnishings and of clothing and jewelry for the bride. There was no institutionalization of a separate "price" for the bride's body which remained in her parents' hands, and virtually no point in the transaction when her parents might hold back money for their own use. Brides were often given small sums of money tucked into their trousseau chests for its symbolic value; and their jewelry had at least limited protection against parents-in-law's desire to pool resources.

Chengdu prerevolutionary marriage exchanges well exemplify the tributary extreme, MMD, in which a daughter receives a dowry supplied primarily by her parents, and in which betrothal presents from the groom's family to the bride's parents are immediately consumable, not easily converted into capital. Marriage exchanges since the revolution have necessarily responded to shifts in the political wind. In the 1980s, during the decade of economic reform, they have conformed to the pattern now typical in Chinese cities of substantial indirect dowries (brideprice) supplemented, in some households, by dowry from the bride's parents and almost always by goods purchased by the new couple from their own savings. In this Chengdu class fraction, the change from the strongly TMP pattern of the past to what Emily Honig and Gail Hershatter call "marital

materialism" is striking (1988:98). A strong expectation remains, however, that the wedding funds will be given as or spent on consumables rather than be transferred to the couple as cash.

In Taipei marriages, which are extremely negotiable, resources enter the transactions from many possible directions and can be routed to several possible destinations. Negotiations, formal and informal, take place at each transfer, so that outcomes can differ greatly. At the most prestigious, dowry-heavy end of the scale, the bride's family may provide virtually everything the bride (and to an extent) her groom may need for daily life "right down to the chamber pot": bed, furniture, and clothing for their daughter, together with a complete head-to-foot outfit of clothing (with watch and wallet) for their son-in-law as well.<sup>7</sup> Money for dowry, however, may come all or in part from the groom's family, or from the bride and groom, singly or together.

The ideal that parents give away the bride while receiving little or nothing in return is ritualized in Taipei when her parents refuse the negotiated brideprice that is ceremoniously presented on the wedding day. A large brideprice, settled on beforehand, may be substantial. A small brideprice — from one-fourth to one-tenth of the large — may be spent for dowry, so that it is returned to the groom's side. If the bride's side does not accept the large brideprice — which smacks of selling their daughter — it will retain the small brideprice to keep, to spend on dowry, or even, rarely, to return the whole. The initially offered large brideprice may be kept by a more grasping family. At one 1970s wedding, an interfering bride's mother's sister seized the large brideprice on behalf of her relatives, nearly ruining the relationship between the bride and her outraged mother-in-law for good. In practice, most families do not negotiate separate large and small sums.

In 1988, seventy-five Taipei women active in family business, whose ages ranged from twenty to eighty-five, described their marriage exchanges to me in detail. For the 10 women over 50, four had requested no brideprice; six had negotiated (rather, their families had) an average of NT\$7,000 in brideprice; and five of those six had actually accepted an average of NT\$6,550. For the 17 women between 40 and 49, six brides' families had requested no brideprice; 11 had negotiated brideprices averaging NT\$8,750; and 8 of the 11 had actually accepted an average of NT\$7,600. For the 22 women between 30 and 39, only one had not received brideprice; 21 negotiated an average of NT\$143,400; and 13 of that 21 actu-

7. Asking why a bride's household sends the groom a full suit of clothes usually produces the answer that such is the custom. One wise informant suggested that it symbolized the hold a woman wants to have over her future husband. "It means you get *all* of him." The explanation I offer here is that sending the groom a full suit is congruent with and emphatic of the ideal statement made by a bride's parents through her dowry: "She won't cost you a cent; we have enough money to support even our daughters."

ally accepted an average of NT\$93,000. For the 26 women between 20 and 29, nine families requested no brideprice; 17 negotiated an average of NT\$123,300, and 11 of those 17 actually accepted an average of NT\$114,000.

When they are given at all, brideprices for the youngest cohorts show a steady secular increase, even allowing for the dramatic inflation that occurred between 1968 and 1988. This trend reflects the rapidly expanding economy based largely on the labor of young unmarried women. The average accepted brideprice for all cohorts was roughly equivalent to twice the current cost of building or buying and furnishing a simple dwelling, or to between five and ten times the yearly wage of an unskilled laborer.

The oft-stated convention that part of the brideprice be returned to the groom's parents had not greatly affected the average brideprice of the women I interviewed. Brideprices that were actually accepted did not differ much from the sum originally negotiated, except for women in their thirties. Taipei parents have not traditionally (or actually) dowered their daughters out of their own pockets and have often retained cash after wedding expenses were paid.

Brideprice can flow through many channels. All or part may remain with the bride's parents, rather than being funneled to the new couple. A bride's parents may agree to match the brideprice they plan to accept, and spend the whole on the couple's dowry. Or they may simply give the young people the money to spend as they like; many small businesses grow from such funds. The couple and their parents may agree that the young folks may use all cash gifts from friends and relatives. A bride may give all or part of the red envelopes (of money) she receives during the engagement to her mother, to defray the costs of entertaining the groom's family. The mother may secretly invest some of this money and quietly return it when the daughter has developed some independence of action in her new home.

Although very recently many Taiwan newlyweds have set up their own homes, generations of Taipei people expected a young couple to reside with the groom's family, at least for a year or so. During these months, many groom's parents invoke the TMP *jia* ideal of pooled resources for all coresidents, including the dowry of new brides. Cash dowry sometimes is deposited with the bride's mother-in-law for use by the groom's family. A Taipei woman married in the mid-1970s complained bitterly that her entire large money dowry had been consumed in living expenses and the education of the groom's younger siblings. Another, younger bride told of turning over to her mother-in-law even the gold jewelry she brought into marriage. (Gold jewelry, easily converted into cash, is usually treated as a consumer durable, protected by sentiment against the groom's family's claims.)

The "public" part of money dowries, sometimes twenty-four-carat jewelry, sometimes an elegantly presented bankbook, is displayed on the day of marriage and is often supervised after marriage by the groom's parents. A bride's "private"

money, however, is given secretly, and sometimes kept in her mother's care, to prevent its being pooled. Private money has its continuing significance for women, and its irritating quality for husbands and mothers-in-law, because it contravenes the principle that a *jia* is a group of people with a common economy. Despite that principle, the couple may have resources of their own and so may negotiate separate control of wedding gifts and payments.

As important recent research has demonstrated, most wage-earning daughters maintain less control over their wages than do sons (Greenhalgh 1985) and must rely on parents' whims to determine how much of what they have contributed to the family purse will be returned to them in dowry. Young married businesswomen, however, often finance their enterprises out of capital saved from premarital earnings. A woman in Chengdu is nearly three times as likely to have such independent savings invested in her business than is a Taipei woman, to whom the absolute TMP duty to parents is much stressed. Such Confucian ideology is actively (if often feebly) combated in urban China by socialist support for women's work and independence. Nothing comparable legitimates women's autonomy in Taiwan.

Once saved, whether by a young woman's mother for her later use or by the woman herself, a sum thus earned is generally accorded a special aura. A woman's right to dispose of such an earned trove is likely to be respected, even by parents and parents-in-law. It is tempting to speculate about the mystical, fetishized quality of money in Chinese society — I return to this theme in Chapter 8 — but we should not ignore a more pragmatic explanation for this apparent inviolability of women's nest eggs. Parents-in-law (or husbands) only with difficulty lay claim to money a woman has saved prior to marriage quite simply because perhaps only she knows what she has and where it is. To accumulate it she may have already deceived her parents or negotiated with them about keeping it. She may not have told her husband about her finances, or she may have trusted him with this knowledge against his mother. Confucianists are right: money is subversive of order; its abstract nature, as an easily portable concretized store of value, empowers the weakest. Or, as Taiwanese women put it, "Whoever has money is Number One."

Many women expand their separate and secret accounts, through time-honored petty-capitalist mechanisms such as rotating credit associations, moneylending, buying houses to rent out, receiving money from their working daughters, creative accounting with household money supplied by their husbands, gambling, and, in contemporary Taiwan, by investing in a free-wheeling stock exchange. This last lies halfway between sober corporate capitalism and a crapshoot, more fun than mahjong. Chengdu women too told me of their own and their mothers' investments in gambling, rotating credit, moneylending, commodities, and gold bars in prerevolution times. But: "We don't do that now, of course." Marriage exchanges offer a moment when astute young women may

lay hands on a sum that may be their most dependable guarantee of good treatment and a voice in household councils.<sup>8</sup>

Grooms get a good deal less out of marriage exchanges. They will share in the dowry consumables — the beds and bedding, the televisions and motorcycles — but in dowry-heavy marriages they will not get much cash in hand unless they get it from their wives. When brideprice and indirect dowry have been substantial, young men can capitalize businesses with more assurance that the "dowry" is really theirs. Dowries, whatever their origins, purchase a new lathe, stock for a store, or, in the old days, even a little piece of land.<sup>9</sup> The future harmony of many a marriage is assured or destroyed in the initial negotiations between wife and husband over the money that each has brought to their germ of a new *jia*.

A young man has more opportunities than a young woman to earn money before he marries, and he is under less pressure to give it to his parents. Like a woman, his ability to influence what his parents will put into the marriage pot, and how much of that will come into his own hands, depends very much on his economic relationships with his parents before marriage. It is harder for a man to bargain with the parents whom it will always be his duty to care for. Women carry neither the economic nor the ideological burdens of men, including the burden of appearing at all times to conform to the tributary model of a filial son. Women are thus more willing to discuss the delicate financial choices they make, to allow that a dowry was especially big "because I worked in the family business for many years, and helped them make a lot of money." Men are not supposed to think about brideprice as something that, under some circumstances, will benefit them at the expense of their parents and siblings. They are not supposed to turn over their pay envelopes to Mother in order to build up a claim on a large brideprice from which he will benefit. They *do* these things, I think, but find it wigglingly embarrassing to talk about them.

Both young men and young women are sometimes expected to earn what is given in their marriage exchanges (Chen Chung-min 1985). For a woman, especially, the price of choosing her own husband may be exactly what her father would ask of any suitor. A woman from Qingdao, forced into a marriage

8. Ownership of half or more of the capital in a family business in which she participates may also give a woman greater power to control her fertility. This is only slightly less true for a sample of Taipei and Chengdu women born before 1950 as for those born after (Gates 1993).

9. Where land was expensive, dowry money would rarely be enough for its purchase. Informants from outlying areas in Taiwan, however, have told me of purchases of land made from dowry. Brides in Taiwan and, to my knowledge, in Sichuan, bring land as dowry only very rarely. Arthur Wolf underlines the unusual nature of such a gift in prerevolutionary Taiwan by its method of presentation: a box full of dirt, labeled as to the size and quality of the plot, took an honored place in the procession of dowry goods to the groom's household so that even the illiterate would know of the grand gift (Wolf and Huang 1980:76).

by her father in the 1930s, vowed she would run away as soon as she found someone she liked. She did, too, sending her father enough money from her wages as a textile worker to enable him to arrange her divorce and "buy" (her word) a substitute wife for the first husband. "I had to, didn't I? I *had* left him without the wife they'd agreed on." Twenty years later, a Taibei woman paid her father the scraped-together savings of ten years of dressmaking as her own brideprice. "If your husband doesn't have it, *you* will have to take responsibility!" Daddy insisted.

In my Taibei sample, money was a major element in marriage exchanges. This has been true for a long time, judging from stories of elderly informants and from accounts of customs in both Taiwan and Fujian into the last century. In the Chengdu sample, it played a much smaller role; direct consumables that could not be transformed into the means of production were far more salient. Indeed, the whole pattern of marriage exchanges was noticeably different. In Taibei, among women over fifty, 50 percent of all marriages included money brideprices; in Chengdu, only 8 percent did. In Taibei, among women forty-nine and under, 77 percent of marriages included money brideprices; in Chengdu, the figure was 16 percent. In the younger group, as both cities became more prosperous, money was included in more brideprices. In Taibei, marital exchanges drew money from more sources along more paths of transmission, and resulted in more varied outcomes.

These data from Taibei and Chengdu illustrate the ways in which TMP and PCMP pressures on kinship produced a variety of results, but alone they would not convince. Setting them against two other collections of information about marriage exchanges strengthens the argument considerably. Neither of these sets was collected within the framework of concepts I wish now to apply to them. Insofar as they support, or at least do not contradict, my arguments, they are strong evidence: they are larger than my set, represent more regions in China, and lack the biases of data collected from a single class fraction.

#### THE WOLF DATA

The first of these sets of information on brideprice and dowry is taken from the fieldnotes of Arthur P. Wolf, made at seven sites from 1979 to 1980 on prerevolutionary practices. He interviewed between eighty and ninety women over age fifty-nine in each site except that near Beijing. Much of China was closed to foreign investigation at that time, so that most of the sites were near urban centers. Falling into three natural groups, they include two on the North China Plain (near Beijing and in Shandong) and one in Sichuan (in Chapter 4 described as strong TMP, weak PCMP); two in the lower Yangzi (in Zhejiang and in Jiangsu) and one in Shanxi (strong in both TMP and PCMP); and one in Fujian (weak TMP and strong PCMP) and similar to what we know about Taiwan. They thus

permit closer scrutiny of three "type" locales and two that push my hypothesis to its limits.

Table 1 categorizes the information supplied by Wolf's subjects about which family — bride's or groom's — gave more in marriage exchanges in seven sites. I have separated the marriage exchanges for which Wolf gives data sufficient for deciding this question into seven categories: "D only," in which the bride brought a dowry, even if only a humble one, with her; "D > BP," in which the value of the dowry outweighed that of gifts given by the groom's side; "Bal.," in which the two families gave approximately balanced amounts to the couple, often by explicit agreement; "Ind. D," in which all or the greater part of the dowry came as indirect dowry from the groom's side; "Ind. D + BP," a category made necessary by the customary separation, in Jiangsu and Zhejiang, of the brideprice into two distinct components (one a cash sum to her parents "for rearing her" or as "buy body money," the other earmarked for the purchase of dowry goods); "Sale," in which local informants described one-sided money transaction as such; and "No exchange," in which nothing but the bride's person was transferred — either because of extreme poverty or because both sides wanted to save money and agreed to limit ceremonial expenditure.

I summarize these figures by grouping them into three categories: "dowry-heavy" (D only, D > BP, and Bal.), "brideprice-heavy" (Ind. D, Ind. D + BP, Sale), and No exchange. The logic for this division depends on my focus on daughters (rather than on sons) as objects of exchange, as Chinese surely see them, and on the very material difference between whether a woman's marriage added to or subtracted from her natal family's resources. I sift the data through three types of TMP/PCMP locales.

In Beijing/Shandong/Sichuan (high TMP/low PCMP), a woman's family gave a substantial part of the wedding exchanges: in 76 percent of the cases, as opposed to the 21 percent in which the groom side's contributions were heavier. My argument, suggesting that people living in areas strong in TMP forms of exchange would follow TMP expectations and dower their daughters rather than sell them, is supported. Families followed the TMP ideal because PCMP ideals were unelaborated; these were areas of low commoditization and little demand for women's labor outside the household. A woman's family was the weaker party in the negotiations to arrange for her maintenance as a reproducing adult; they thus paid the cost of arranging it for her as their final duty to a female agnate.

In Jiangsu/Zhejiang/Shanxi (high TMP/high PCMP), dowry-heavy exchanges are markedly fewer, and brideprice-heavy ones much more numerous: 11 percent as opposed to 72 percent. These areas of strongly competing TMP and PCMP forms of exchange demanded ostentatious ceremonial in response to TMP pressures to celebrate kinship. But, given equally strong PCMP pressures to accumulate investable wealth, they skimped on those ceremonies as

TABLE 1. Relative weights of dowry and brideprice for women over fifty-nine in 1979-80, in three types of economic locales

Site	No.	Dowry heavy		Brideprice heavy			No exchange	
		D only	D > BP	Bal.	Ind. D	Ind. D + BP		Sale
Beijing	44	7 (16%) 73%	1 (2%)	24 (55%)	8 (18%) 20%	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	3 (7%) 7%
Totals								
Shandong	78	1 (1%) 73%	9 (12%)	47 (60%)	18 (23%) 27%	3 (4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%) 0%
Totals								
Sichuan	85	3 (4%) 82%	27 (32%)	39 (46%)	8 (9%) 15%	1 (1%)	4 (5%)	3 (4%) 4%
Totals								
Averages		76%			21%			
Jiangsu	73	6 (8%) 19%	2 (3%)	6 (8%)	15 (21%) 45%	27 (37%)	3 (4%)	14 (19%) 19%
Totals								
Zhejiang	58	1 (2%) 10%	3 (5%)	2 (3%)	5 (9%) 78%	29 (50%)	11 (19%)	7 (12%) 12%
Totals								
Shanxi	67	1 (1%) 4%	2 (3%)	0 (0%)	10 (15%) 94%	44 (66%)	9 (13%)	1 (1%) 1%
Totals								
Averages		11%			72%			
Fujian	42	5 (12%) 29%	2 (5%)	5 (12%)	10 (24%) 38%	0 (0%)	6 (14%)	14 (33%) 33%
Totals								
Averages		29%			38%			33%

Source: A. Wolf 1980 fieldnotes.

they applied to women. Parents gave their daughters little or nothing, forcing status-seeking husbands' families to foot the bill for suitable display through indirect dowry. These cultural responses were supported by a regional pattern of the use of women's labor. Women worked out in agriculture, handicrafts, and eventually in industry more in the lower Yangzi than in any other part of China. Marrying a daughter out was at least a small economic loss. Securing a daughter-in-law brought in labor power with calculable value.<sup>10</sup> (It may seem odd to include the Shanxi site here; for Shanxi to be high in petty-capitalist characteristics is counterintuitive. This peculiarity will be discussed below, in connection with the Buck data.)

The data from Fujian (low TMP/high PCMP) look decidedly different from those of the other two clusters. Its marriages fall roughly into thirds: 29 percent are dowry-heavy, 38 percent BP-heavy, and 33 percent involved no exchanges. These figures support the contention that marriage exchanges here are the outcomes of extremely open negotiations characteristic of market transactions, a contention that the narrative data from which they are drawn also support.

#### THE BUCK DATA

A third set of empirical data against which to test my hypotheses of how interacting modes of production affected marriage exchanges is that given in *Land Utilization in China*, compiled from surveys of 15,316 farms in 152 widely dispersed localities between 1929 and 1933 by J. Lossing Buck and his student associates (1937). The sample is neither random geographically nor fully representative of China's class range: it was drawn largely from households that owned land or had fairly secure tenure, and was thus overwhelmingly rural, agrarian, and from the middling to most prosperous parts of the petty-capitalist classes. It has been criticized on other grounds as well (e.g. Coale 1985; A. Wolf 1985a, 1985b; Arrigo 1986). Its existence, however, like that of Mount Everest, is hard to ignore. And it includes the largest set of data on "traditional" marriage exchanges we will ever have.

Table 2 summarizes the ratio between the cost of supplying a daughter with dowry (D) and the cost of marrying a son (W), derived from Buck's data.

10. A small but well-contextualized set of data that adds to this pattern comes from Adele M. Fielde's life histories of about two dozen women in her 1887 study of women's lives in Chaozhou (Swatow). This region represents a southern extension of Hokkien peoples into northern Guangzhou; Chaozhou was a city known for its textile arts and exports. Fielde's evidence shows that many women supported themselves independently on such handicraft at that time. Marriage exchanges there took the form common in Zhejiang and Jiangsu, where an indirect dowry intended to purchase the trousseau was given along with a separate sum that appears to have been brideprice pure and simple.

TABLE 2. Summary of D:W ratios by political-economic type

Political-economic type		Site	D:W
High TMP/low PCMP	(type)	North China Plain	1.13
	(variant)	Sichuan Plain	1.55
High TMP/high PCMP	(type)	Yangzi Valley	.71
	(variant)	Guangdong	.55
Low TMP/high PCMP	(type)	Fujian	.53
	(variant)	Gansu/Qinghai	.50

D:W ratios in these six regions in this table support the idea that regional phenomena are appropriately interpreted as outcomes of interactions between TMP and PCMP choices.<sup>11</sup> At the very least, they quantify the variation that regularly occurred among marriages essentially similar in ritual performance but significantly different in the material results of marriage exchanges. In regions where petty-capitalist choices could be made without risking large losses in a complex tributary system, parents negotiated sharply over their children's marriage costs. Where markets were feeble or where a family stood to gain much through emulating official ritual, they dowered their daughters and gave token brideprices for their daughters-in-law.

The material in the Appendix supports the arguments about Chinese bride-price and dowry made so far and provides an empirical test of the regionalization presented in Chapter 4.

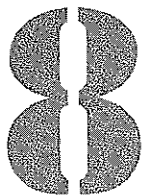
Marriage and the exchanges that accompanied it were among the most important activities in which Chinese households engaged. Marriage, unlike death or birth, was arranged for largely through spending money; it was relatively controllable and tightly linked to the flow of resources within and between households. It responded to household needs for reproduction of family members, but also to the need for women's work. A woman's value, and hence the negotiations into which she, her parents, and her groom's parents entered, was determinable only through a complex local calculus of demographic, productive, market, and personal factors.

The relatively abundant quantitative data on brideprice and dowry support the contention that tributary and petty-capitalist exchange patterns penetrated the so-

11. Although the Buck data on weddings and dowries (and on funeral expenses) would repay further investigation, the task deserves separate study. For example, it is apparent to anyone working with these data that the D:W ratios of the North China Plain as it grades westward increasingly resemble those of the lower Yangzi Valley, a predictable result because distance from the capital increased choices.

cial organization of late-imperial/early-republican marriage. One might find parallel patterns of regionally varied customary behavior in other areas by considering the implications for them of two coherent and partially contradictory modes of production linking custom and economy. A changing market for women's labor would not instantly transform marriage exchanges. But a commoditizing regional economy would generate a powerful pressure for market/contract transactions. If commodity production persists, this model would come to be seen as an alternative guide to kin relations, especially those most weakly protected by law. In such regions, people would respond to new conditions, especially as they affected women and the young — as in minor and delayed transfer marriages. Daughters and wives were worth haggling over. In regions not much penetrated by commoditization, the strongest force shaping the natural chaos of household decisions would be the hierarchical exchanges of ideal kinship and the legal framework that protected the property rights of men. Daughters and wives were dependent burdens — unwelcomed, expensive necessities for the reproduction of sons. The complex of exchanges, social relations, and justifying ideology which made up a mode of production framed and shaped people's responses to economic change, whether that change came from population growth, new technology, imperialist capitalism, or ruling-class fiat.

The existence of a demand for commoditized labor does not instantly translate into cultural variation: people must find ways of thinking about it, of rationalizing it, and of valorizing it. Such new thoughts, however, are themselves drawn especially from the concrete experiences of production and exchange, which are the relationships through which we maintain our material — and hence our social and intellectual — lives.



## Folk Ideologies: Rulers and Commoners

The Chinese of Weihaiwei [Shandong] say that in spite of the devastation that locusts can work among crops they are not really so much to be dreaded as many other insects who *have no king* and are therefore under no one's control and subject to no law. If monarchical government, it is thought, could be established among the more harmful flies and grubs, the happiness of labouring mankind would be materially augmented.

— R. F. Johnston, district officer and magistrate, Weihaiwei, 1910

Money is a good fellow, round and square alternately. . . . With ten-thousand in your pocket try hard and you may attain to any nobility, any rank. . . . If you have money, fear not to go wherever you like, even to Yunnan or Kueichou. The years pass until you have a good fortune. Then you buy rank and a button for your cap and you dress in excellent furs. Then you pack up your wealth, hire satellites, armed with foreign pistols, and return home. Everyone comes to congratulate you on becoming a Ts'ai Shen [Wealth God], and to admire you. To sum up, all other words and things are useless. The best is money.

— From couplets on a popular depiction of the wealth god,  
early twentieth century

This chapter focuses on folk ideologies as they have reflected power and enabled resistance among ordinary Chinese people. Ideologies are sets of ideas and practices by which we explain and justify the world as we know it. We construct these in large part to rationalize to ourselves our own painful experiences or to rationalize to others the pain we inflict on them. We construct them also as a means to argue, and sometimes to act, on behalf of what we want. Although many things we "want" are socially constructed, folk ideologies nearly always emphasize basic and obvious desires: for health, for supportive intimate

relations of some kind, for dignity and esteem, for the absence of physical brutality and overbearing external control, and for the material resources to make all the rest possible. In these desires, ordinary people do not differ much from one society to another, though ruling classes often develop baroque and involuntal longings and express them in overripe images.

Ideologies are necessarily multiple, especially in class societies. Life's difficulties arise both from influences clearly outside human control — we may delay death, for example, but not avoid it — and from those which are more or less clearly perceived as resulting from human action and which are thus controllable — we must pay the rent, but perhaps we will someday save enough to buy our land. Even allowing for the plasticity of culture, truly natural constraints on our desires exist. In addition, every significant social group will have a particular perspective, and some will have greater power than others to spread and implement it. Those with power to categorize the cosmos into natural and social and to valorize its elements can be contested, but it is usually necessary to hold the contest on the ground they have defined. This is because the experienced world from which their ideology grows is also in part our experienced world: they make us pay the rent. And it is true because, conspiratorially or in honest belief, rulers propagandize their vision, their language, their class stance as the best.

Caught in this web of words and deeds, ordinary people only with great difficulty formulate their real experience clearly. It is harder yet for us to articulate an alternative, autonomous vision. Most people in class societies have only fragmentary experiences with either autonomy or another world imaginable outside their own. Should such an ideology achieve real lucidity, it would constitute a threat to the power of those who rule partly through monopolizing the production of ideas. Folk ideologies must be revealing enough of common experience to ring true to their makers, but cryptic enough to conceal that truth from the minds of dogmatic rulers. Ruling-class ideologies are like cannon; their profiles on the city walls are displayed for all to see. Folk ideologies are like punji spikes or the grenades made of hollowed stones that Chinese revolutionaries strewed for enemy feet; they are weapons in a long guerrilla war.

How does one analyze an ideology constructed to remain only intermittently visible? The collection of essays on popular culture edited by David Johnson et al. shows the state of the art in this endeavor at present. In their preface, Johnson et al. emphasize their focus on values and their communication, noting that "it is impossible to comprehend behavior without understanding the values, ideas, and beliefs — the mentalities — of those who are acting. And to understand values and the like one must study how they moved from person to person and group to group, and how they changed as they moved. . . . we believe that focusing on values and their communication offers an especially effective way of understanding late imperial China" (1985:1). Materialists would add that it is equally impossible to comprehend mentalities without observing the behavior of those

who are doing the thinking. Thought does not come from gods, platonic essences, or even simply from others' thoughts — as every generation of young people responding ambivalently to their parents' values attests. Experience in the material world valorizes some of the notions that are floated through our minds, while devalorizing others.

Johnson et al. also ask how the diversity of Chinese values was integrated into "a single complex cultural system," without which "the whole idea of Chinese culture dissolves"; they assert that "the sharing of values, ideas, assumptions, and points of reference across great social, geographic, and economic distances is the result of specific, identifiable human actions. Hence, one of our main concerns has been with the agents and mechanisms by which verbal and symbolic structures were transmitted. We have also sought to understand, from the very beginning, how beliefs and attitudes were modified as they were presented to different kinds of audiences, and how the mentalities of the various social groups differed from each other" (xiii). The difficulty here is this program's assumption of the prior existence of the values being transmitted. Issues of causation, explanations of why these values were what they were, are not central for most of the essays.

In her essay in this volume, however, Evelyn S. Rawski sketches an account of the creation and selective maintenance of values. She emphasizes the Ming/Qing commercialization, which generated an "ideology of merit-making" and associated phenomena, and "the rise of elite concern about declining morals, itself a product of social change" (28). The growing integration of late-imperial Chinese culture was a product not only of conscious official policy but of the increased integration of markets and hence of rural and urban places. The enhanced communications network helped bring the value systems of the elite and peasant tradition into closer congruence. Integration brought social stability, Rawski argues, but it also "increased social differentiation and social tension, which were engendered by the same socio-economic conditions that produced integration" (28, 32, 33).

Although Johnson et al. and many similarly inclined scholars focus on the distribution or exchange of values, we must address their creation as well, else the values we explore will be severed from their broader meanings, from the concreteness and ambiguities of experience which make folk ideologies a weapon in the struggle for power rather than a catechism to be accepted. Concern with the production of values is necessary too because it is increasingly difficult to accept a vision of a stream of values created by previous generations flowing automatically into our own lives (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1987). Tradition, values, ideology, are produced with each new generation, almost always as a means to capture experience coherently, and thus gain power.

Some aspects of Chinese folk ideologies are neatly institutionalized in folk religion and other direct discourses: on women, on fate, on the universal dualism of *yin* and *yang*. Others must be unearthed, delicately, from anecdotes of daily

life. In what follows, I listen attentively to what Chinese people say the supernatural world is like and to their insistence that supernaturals are homologous to social categories. This approach may be criticized as "reflectionism," a position properly condemned when the analyst imagines that the supernatural mirror reflects toward common people (and anthropologists) only the vision of rulers. Religion may be a partial, but can never be a complete, mystification of ordinary people's lived experience: experience is too necessary in the formation of thought, and especially in those forms of shared thought that constitute ideology. Religion is not something passively accepted as given from on high, but rather a device created and used to make counterstatements about what is, about what ought to be, and about how the desirable can be achieved. We can and should interpret Chinese folk ideology as an ambivalent and even critical account of social reality. Such an account has been shaped by popular experience as well as by the hegemonic power of rulers. It is used to valorize and implement behavior not sanctioned by the model of laudable hierarchy which it initially presents.

As in most class societies, a great deal of folk religion — rituals and their associated explanations — is about power. Some actors have more, and some less, and power comes from different sources. The analyst risks a great deal by seizing too quickly on "power" as an irreducible, free-floating given, an end in itself. To see power detached from the material world is either superstition or inappropriate naturalism, a demonic desire for domination implying that our species-nature is power-mad. Lack of an adequate political-economic conceptual framework almost always drives those who seek explanation into naturalism or idealism.

#### FOLK IDEOLOGY AND THE MATERIAL

If belief and ritual are to serve their creators not only by reflecting reality for contemplation but also by teaching people how to manipulate the world, they must be reasonably transparent. Symbols and sets of symbols must cohere, vivify ideas, and appeal to the masses of people who have little time or taste for intellectual deconstruction. This is not to say that either Chinese or their popular ideas were simple-minded; the complex code of folk religion immediately repels such a notion. Much of folk ideology as known to elite and folk intellectuals, however, is esoteric, irrelevant as guides to life or shapers of thought. For popular ritual specialists such as Daoist practitioners or Buddhist nuns, ideological elaboration is the stock in their petty-capitalist trade. Like academics, they compete to produce intellectual novelty based on the authority of history or personal revelation. In parallel, the anthropological analysis of folk ideology has, in recent decades, achieved a truly astonishing luxuriance of complexity. This specialist solipsism need not concern us here: a materialist understanding of folk ideology

depends on our grasping the relatively straightforward symbols and connections among them which are easily accessible to ordinary people leading commonplace lives. Even viewed from this perspective, folk ideology is obscure enough. The difficulties of perceiving its causes and effects are magnified, however, when analysts begin with incorrect assumptions about the material reality of which the enactment of ideology remains only a part.

Much of folk ideology becomes transparent once an appropriate model of Chinese political economy has been constructed. Inappropriate models are serious obstacles to understanding these ideologies. Steven Sangren's recent subtle and impressive synthesis of Taiwan folk religion poises on just such a difficulty. Discrepancies between his perceptive rendering of the historical development of regional religious networks in northern Taiwan and political-economic assumptions taken from G. William Skinner's central-place analysis nudge his arguments away from connection with concrete material life. Because "marketing" and "administrative" hierarchies fail to account for all the data, Sangren posits that "ritual organization thus constitutes a third hierarchy of regional systems that must be added to the economic and administrative hierarchies Skinner describes." Part (perhaps all) of the religious system, once institutionalized, can take on "an existence of its own" (1987:16, 62).

Anthropology began with a rejection of such extremes of alterity in which other people's ideologies were simply inexplicable. There is little intellectual difference between thinking of people's beliefs as self-contained, self-reproducing, and irreducible and thinking of them as bizarre superstitions that their gods oblige them to enact.<sup>1</sup> Treating things that humans produce — including ideas, values, visions of the supernatural, and ideational "culture" as a whole — as agents is fetishism, not analysis. This is a curious error for Sangren to commit, for his careful data reveal examples of the *lack* of autonomy of ritual communities pulled into administrative orbits (e.g. p. 112).

Sangren is too good an ethnographer and scholar to leave us in doubt as to where the problems in his data must be linked with autonomous ideology. As he tackles the explanation of the spatial and historical distribution of the practices of the Daxi (Ta-ch'i) area, he reminds us that

in his analyses of China's hierarchy of central places, Skinner insists that economic and administrative organization and functions be rigorously distinguished. He consistently argues that the spatial structure of economy emerges,

1. This argument has been most pointedly put by Marvin Harris, criticizing the idealism of a classic of American anthropology, *Patterns of Culture*. "To explain striking differences among the cultures of the Kwakiutl, the Dobuans, and the Zuni, [Ruth] Benedict fell back upon a myth which she attributed to the Digger Indians. The myth said: 'God gave to every people a cup, a cup of clay, and from this cup they drank their life. . . . They all dipped in the water but their cups were different.' What this has meant to many people ever since is that only God knows why cultures differ" (1974:4).

more or less "naturally," out of the maximizing decisions of peasants and merchants. In contrast, China's administration, motivated to maximize very different values, was imposed from the top down. As a result, despite forces tending toward convergence, administrative and economic hierarchies never align perfectly. Some district capitals were established in cities of minor economic importance, and some economically dominant cities served no or only modest administrative functions. . . . Skinner is essentially correct in arguing that patterns of marketing behavior and social organization are correlated, but he may overestimate the causal priority of marketing logic in the historical process through which this correlation is achieved. (15-16)<sup>2</sup>

Sangren allows Skinner's disjunction between marketing economics and administrative politics to stand. At the same time, he sees the need for a political-economic approach, drawing on the idea of a domestic mode of production. Recognizing that industrialization and other forms of change have not altered Chinese life as both old Marxist and neoclassical economists would expect, especially in the family, he observes that the

persistence of traditional values challenges the notion that dominant modes of production . . . clearly determine the nature of the "articulation" between domestic modes of production and the wider economy. . . . In fact, Chinese peasants and workers have effectively resisted attempts to obstruct the pursuit of traditional domestic values. This seems to indicate that, at least to some degree, it is the wider sphere of economic organization that is constrained by the requirements of the Chinese form of the "domestic mode of production and reproduction" and associated values. (43)

Sangren sees correctly the need for the connections among production, reproduction, social relations, and ideology which mode-of-production analysis offers. The domestic mode, however, sits uneasily in the same intellectual framework with retail trade and bureaucratic administration.

The household and its products can be seen more parsimoniously as the outcome of tributary and petty-capitalist interactions. Such a position is implicit in some of Sangren's analyses. He shows us, for example, the interaction of TMP and PCMP mechanisms — and the predominance of the former — in the settlement of north Taiwan as he grapples with the marketing/administrative dichotomy in Daxi:

2. Barbara Ward makes a similar point: Skinner's market model persuades us that each standard marketing area was typically discrete. This separation was not true of temple festival areas [in the Hong Kong region], which, though organized by local committees and focused on particular temples, nevertheless often drew participants and probably always drew opera audiences from much further afield (1985:174).

Skinner's argument for the social and cultural importance of the standard marketing community in China is well supported in Ta-ch'i [Daxi]. . . . However, as I have repeatedly noted, the causal priority of economic factors is less than clear. In Ta-ch'i's case, the parameters of the standard marketing community seem to have emerged as much from the historical pattern of patent-initiated settlement and subsequent competition among rival ethnic factions as from economic strategizing per se. The granting of government patents to develop large tracts of land resulted in the territorial clustering of ethnic groups in the island.

These historical circumstances resulted in a close correspondence between ethnic group, town, and marketing communities that defies the assignment of clear-cut causal priorities. Much the same is true of the historical convergence of ritual and economic patterns of interaction; again, the prominence of ethnic competition in northern Taiwan's settlement played an important role. Many multivillage-level territorial-cult deities achieved popularity for the aid they rendered in fights with rival factions. . . . this symbolic differentiation from outsiders plays an important role in the social construction of the magical power of these deities. . . . Hence the convergence between standard marketing community and ritual domain in Ta-ch'i, and in many other townships in northern Taiwan, derives almost directly from the settlers' penchant for differentiating very sharply between insiders and outsiders along ethnic lines. This penchant is certainly as much cultural as economic. (1987:108)

The curious equation between retail marketing and the "economic" once again leads thought astray. Patent holders gained the right to import men to settle tracts of land. But to settle there, these men had to fight the Aboriginal owners and any other rival claimants, and they had quickly to bring the land under cultivation to feed themselves. Surely these activities, and the rights to land tenure gained thereby, had economic aspects? With such rights sustained weakly by the state, and directly by the force of solidarity among the settlers, they had political ones as well. But by separating the inseparable, Sangren cuts ethnicity and religion free to become cultural pendants rather than part of the political-economic process of reproducing people and resources in a specific historical context.

Ethnicity and local identity are persistent problems for Sangren, always edging causally into autonomy and hence theoretically into idealism. Community identity (sometimes ethnic) crops up in his analysis of *shetuan* (*she t'uan*) or ritual societies, which are extremely common in Taiwan. Some at least are occupationally based, resembling guilds. Sangren concludes, however, that "they do not exert any perceptible economic power." He attributes their persistence to "their symbolic utility in contributing to the reproduction of local identity." He tells us

too that *shetuan* members, who demonstrate bravery and invulnerability by fire-walking, "are conceived as the gods' soldiers; their role, much like that of local militia . . . is to help the gods protect the community" (1987:85-86).

In my experience, such groups are the musclemen who defend local monopolies, local land and water rights, local gambling dens, and today the local bagmen who pay for votes at elections. Their members are of considerable importance in efforts to secure crumbs from the flow of tribute, and profits from the sale of legal and illegal commodities. Not all *shetuan* members are gangsters, but in a state seen as partisan and rapacious, and in a *saute qui peut* market, one of the costs of doing petty-capitalist business is to have a few tough guys frequently on display. "Insider/outsider" identities are linked to the holding of resources against officials or against other petty-capitalist factions.

Such plausible and materialist alternative explanations cast doubt on Sangren's claim, in his interpretation of pilgrimage networks, that "convergence at the boundaries [of economic, administrative, and ritual catchment areas] should not be read as evidence that ritual community is epiphenomenal to economic causes" (120). Warned by Emily Martin Ahern of the intimate connection that ritual implies between this world and the other world (1981), I believe Sangren has erred. If we see ritual as deriving power from its political-economic base, we can make better and simpler sense of the folk ideologies that have structured popular politics in China both under the late empire and in this century. Through them we hear the clever and sometimes cryptic but rarely obscurantist voices of Chinese commoners.

#### THE HIERARCHIES OF HEAVEN

Defining a universe of supernaturals to serve as a table of organization to the social hierarchy has absorbed much of the Chinese religious imagination, as the following discussion emphasizes.<sup>3</sup> In that universe the sociopolitical forms of power, orthodox or counterhegemonic, are generally imagined as humanlike actors in a single, unified cosmos. The Chinese "other world" — the abode of supernaturals including the souls of the dead — is the *yin* world. It lies below, or "outside," this one, and is complexly connected to it. A large literature, Chinese and foreign, has captured the many details that emphasize the parallels between and the connectedness of the two worlds. The *yin* world contains much

3. Or perhaps the heavenly bureaucracy has simply absorbed too much of Western social scientists' imaginations. Chinese readers will, I hope, forgive yet another manifestation of the Western delight in this characteristic of their folk tradition. Because most Western religions are modeled on a feudal system run by illiterate European aristocrats, not on one operated by bureaucratic scholars, their spiritual personnel charts differ vividly. Even a second-generation atheist, tone-deaf to Christianity, cannot help being charmed by the novelty of gods who file their receipts in triplicate.

that is "just like this world," if a bit old-fashioned: contemporary Taiwanese believe that officiating gods dress in Ming court costume and that women in this world still have bound feet (Wolf 1974b:150). A Taipei spirit medium — who claimed to have visited there often in trance — described to me a countryside with domestic animals and towns with streets of shops much like the miniature paper models the pious set up for the convenience of ghosts at *pudu*, or "universal salvation" rites. Land for graves that are the homes of the dead in the other world is purchased with legalistic trappings that unite the two realms. Printed deeds were formerly sold in Sichuan shops to be burned at funerals, emphasizing the grave as a connection between the two realms, and documents were witnessed as evidence for possible court cases on earth or in the other world (Graham 1961:44).

Popular books, stories, and paintings capture and transmit this experience, but spirit travel in both directions is probably more important than words and pictures in perpetuating belief in a supernatural. Much of what people "know" about the other world is regularly confirmed by the constant traffic between it and this one. Mediums go to the ghostly *yin* world in trance; supernaturals visit earthly folk in spirit possession and in dreams. Many Taiwanese who would never trouble to open a pious tract will have seen fire-walking, cheek-piercing, back-bloodying *dangki* (Taiwanese), whose fast-healing injuries are seen to prove the existence of an alternative reality. Everywhere in China, shamanic healing makes crossing the invisible boundary an event that many have witnessed.

The best-known parts of the underworld are the courts, prisons, and offices in which souls are punished and processed administratively for reincarnation (Gray 1875:415; Gray 1878:415; Darley 1917:173; Ayscough 1924; Eberhard 1967:24–59; Doré 1970:85; Goodrich 1981). Comparing the courts and prisons described in Chinese sources over the past few centuries, Wolfram Eberhard outlines the spatial and hierarchical organization of these "hells" and offers ethnographic tidbits confirming their deeply bureaucratic character: hells have written lists of their *yin* population (28n. 16). Officials teem — Clarence Burton Day lists fifty-eight position titles derived from popular prints of gods; these worthies are housed in Kafkaesque buildings 365 stories high, sending arriving souls from one office to another because of incomplete paperwork; living people can be docked years of life and wealth by pen-pushing supernaturals (1969, 214–16, 40, 116). Supernatural officials must not greatly enjoy their otherworld tenure either: they can be demoted and punished for failing civil-service exams and are harassed by innumerable and complex procedures. Their staff often escape to earth, "where they caused harm to human beings working as doctors, whores, or as government officials" (Eberhard 1967:44). Chinese people find this sort of parallel both to the point and mildly funny.

The bureaucratic relationship between gods and humans is a key, persistent element in the popular world view, even when hell is not the immediate context.

A father praying for his daughter's success in Taiwan's 1992 Joint (University) Entrance Exams punctiliously followed the form. In addressing the god, he specified his "daughter's name, her seat number in the exam room and the number on her examination admission card" (*China News* 26 June 1992, p. 8). Most prayers to popular supernaturals inform the recipient of the petitioner's name, household head, and detailed street address.

Above the common world, in a rather better supernatural neighborhood, dwell the *yang* gods, the upper reaches of the bureaucracy in which hellish clerical workers also labor. Though the heavenly hierarchy includes underworld judges and jailers, *yin* and *yang* are separate, the latter pure, the former steeped in pollution. (The *yang* gods are discussed at greater length below.) Humans (in the ungendered generic) are *yang*. The universe, with its cosmic population of anthropomorphic agents, is divided in several ambiguous and overlapping ways: it is layered as Heaven, Earth, and Hell; the *yang* of most gods and all living people are in opposition to the *yin* of the lowest gods and all dead souls; the mundane world of ordinary life is in opposition to the otherworldly under- and overworlds. In one view, all currently disembodied souls are being judged, punished, or in transit to their next incarnation. By contrast, mediums describe the other world as a settled, permanent place, with the souls of ancestors and old friends doing very ordinary things.

We do not have to infer that the supernatural world is very like our own: the Chinese insist that it is, offering endless corroborative details to support the proposition. Their imagery demonstrates that in some senses people and gods are alike (both *yang*); in other senses that gods and ghosts are somewhat alike (both denizens of a world other than this one). Although the lumping of *yang* gods and people asserts the fundamental goodness and productiveness of those groups over against the badness and destructiveness of the dead and their keepers, the lumping of gods and ghosts hints at critique. I explore this ambiguity below.

Discussing gods, ghosts, and ancestors, Arthur Wolf argues that Chinese folk religion "mirrors the social landscape of its adherents. There are as many meanings as vantage points" (1974b:131). From a dense ethnographic base, Wolf argues that Chinese villagers distinguish sharply in their ritual practice among these three categories of supernatural beings, which represent, respectively, bureaucrats, strangers, and kinfolk; ethnography in Taiwan supports this position strongly (e.g. Jordan 1972; Harrell 1974; Wang Sung-hsing 1974). Wolf's reading of Chinese supernaturals as a folk vision of socially salient roles reveals the kind, quality, and limitations of power that come from placement in a system of political-economic relations.

While gods, ghosts, and ancestors are surely the key categories of popular ritual discourse, another distinction, and an important one, remains unexplained in Wolf's trinitarian conception. The persistent dualism that exists in Chinese

popular religion under the guise of Buddhism and Daoism hints at a social complexity of some importance, some doubleness of power which Chinese wish to stress.<sup>4</sup> These two "traditions" flourish in parallel in contemporary Taiwanese folk religion, as they did in popular religion in many parts of China in the past. In Taiwan at least, this duality appears to have more connection with the two kinds of power accessible in a TMP/PCMP social formation than with the distinctions drawn by specialist practitioners of literary-philosophical systems.

Popular religious tradition distinguishes between two kinds of gods: *shen* (*shen*) and *put* (*fo*),<sup>5</sup> seen simultaneously as part of one complex heavenly hierarchy and also as two distinct and parallel categories of spiritual beings. The varied folk traditions of contemporary Taiwan express this duality as one of their most widely shared commonalities. Domestic altars, temples, and emergent cults all symbolize spiritual power in a way that supports the association between continuities in the political-economic system and the ambiguous hierarchy of Daoist and Buddhist gods.

*Shen* and *fo*, Daoist and Buddhist divinities, are merged in general conversation into the supercategory *shen*, "gods." In Taiwan, *shen* is the unmarked member used loosely to refer to both; *fo* is never used in this fashion. In many parts of China, the generic term for gods is sometimes *pusa*, "bodhisattva," which appears to subsume all higher spirits within Buddhist categories. Why Taiwan exhibits this linguistic difference is explained below.

The distinction between *shen* and *fo* is generally interpreted as arising from and being maintained by two distinct written traditions of which the various folk beliefs are illiterate and heterodox versions. Even the noted sociologist C. K. Yang assumed that folk unorthodoxy was the result of ignorant "mixing" of gods that "belonged" in one or the other literary tradition (1967:25). Assignment of gods and their associated rituals to "Buddhist" or "Daoist" categories thus appears random and therefore meaningless. If we approach the distinction in the essentially sociological way in which Wolf has analyzed gods, ghosts, and ancestors, however, the existence of a dual pattern of gods and the symbolism through

4. Outside observers too see much that is dualistic in Chinese religion: Maurice Freedman divides the data into elite and popular versions (1974a); Arthur Wolf rebuts this view, calling for historical interpretations finely attuned to the class- and regionally varied Chinese social landscape (1974a:9). Such debates turn ultimately on the aptness of the social-class analysis presented. Freedman's is too simple and sweeping; Wolf's recognizes the complexity of the social landscape without organizing that landscape to reveal its predictabilities.

5. Taiwanese generally use their own language in discussing folk religion; I use the forms *shen* and *put* where appropriate. As elsewhere in this book, however, I use Mandarin forms (*shen* and *fo*) for concepts widely known throughout the various Chinese societies and represented universally in east Asia by the same characters. Taiwanese nationalists who object to this practice offer no solution to this terminological dilemma (see Hong and Murray 1991).

which the duality is expressed can be seen to convey important messages about the nature of political authority and social class.

Taiwanese domestic altars are insistently, and anomalously, asymmetrical, although Chinese ritual aesthetics is compulsively bilateral. The apparently universal deviance of altars from a bilateral standard in the arrangement of the gods' half of domestic altars is very noticeable, even disquieting. Domestic altars are divided into unequal halves — the larger, left-hand segment for gods, the smaller, right-hand segment for ancestors — but this difference is understandable in Wolf's framework, in which gods outrank ancestors as political authorities outrank commoners.

When we look only at the gods' side of the altar, or at an altar without ancestral tablets, another asymmetry stands out. It is one of the few invariant elements in what is otherwise a highly idiosyncratic display incorporating many or no images, a wide choice of decorative accessories, and a lot of generalized ritual litter. This more striking — and unexplained — asymmetry is in the framed or mounted graphic art that hangs behind and above the altar. These images are made and sold by craftsmen in shops selling ritual objects and in those that sell mirrors and other pictures. They are not sacred images, not having undergone the ceremony of "having the eyes opened." They are described both by ordinary shopkeepers and by those who make and sell ritual equipment as only decorations. It would be easy to commission such pictures as images are commissioned, to meet idiosyncratic aesthetic interests. This is not done; the standard, asymmetrical format prevails. Typically, two written phrases serve as borders enclosing two pictures of gods. The larger, left-hand picture is often a representation of the Buddhist goddess Guanyin; the narrower right-hand one represents the Daoist figure Guan Gong. Guanyin is frequently pictured surrounded by smaller figures popularly identified as Daoist (the "Earth God," Tudi Gong, for example, and the goddess Mazu). Occasionally one sees a single picture in this style used as backdrop to a small altar where space is a problem. Guan Gong, however, is never accompanied by a supportive cast of Buddhist figures. Pictures of him alone or with Daoist attendants appear as decorations on shop altars but not on domestic altars, it would seem. The left/right placement and the unequal size express a hierarchy in which the Buddhist divinity consistently (and insistently) ranks higher than the Daoist.<sup>6</sup>

Informants, when asked, frequently reject a hierarchical interpretation of this invariant symbolism. On being asked which are greater or more powerful, *shen* or *fo*, informants gave varied answers. People with firm commitments to a par-

6. As I have observed the 1990s reinvention of folk religion in Fujian, Sichuan, and Zhejiang, I have seen many iconographic variants, but no displays that contravene the principle that, if shown together, Buddhist divinities outrank Daoist ones. The ranking is visible even above the altar of a Calcutta Chinese family photographed by Ellen Oxfeld (1993:122).

ticular organization affiliated with Buddhism or Daoism (a scripture-chanting sisterhood, for example) tended to side with their favorite deity, but the majority were unwilling to make an invidious distinction or were puzzled by the contradiction implicit in it. An uncomfortable consensus leaned toward the Buddhist gods as ultimately higher, but this response left the question of how Tian Gong, the abstract "Heaven" at the top of the Daoist hierarchy, could possibly be out-ranked. When I pressed the issue, observing that one could call all gods *shen*, but one could not call all gods *fo*, informants retreated to the position that they were more or less equal in power, but different in a number of ways — which I shall shortly specify.

Why then the asymmetrical format for altar pictures?

Taiwan's temples are popularly identified as either Buddhist or Daoist, even though most display a wonderful variety of visible symbols characteristic of both traditions, plus imaginative extras. Although most identifications with one or the other tradition seem historically "correct," some demonstrate that the categorization of Buddhism and Daoism has more than a historical meaning. A widely worshiped Daoist deity — Qingshui Zushi Gong — is iconographically peculiar in the crown and patched robe of a Buddhist, a costume that leads naive worshippers to assume him to be Buddhist. While some informants told me of Buddhist connections in his life, others insisted he is Daoist. Such cases indicate that the Buddhist/Daoist dualism is an inclusive one. People not only *can* categorize folk temples as Buddhist or Daoist: they *must*. Even the new sects that are constantly emerging are seen as modifications of one or the other of the two traditions. There are no intermediate cases. The duality seen on domestic altars reappears in the categorization of temples, though because temples are identified exclusively with one tradition or the other, one cannot observe a hierarchy between the two.

How does a naive worshiper — newly moved to north Taiwan, say, and paying her respects to Qingshui Zushi Gong — sort gods as Buddhist or Daoist? Iconography can be puzzling. The operative signal is the same Wolf observed being used to distinguish gods from ghosts and ancestors: *shen* and *fo* receive different food offerings. More than anything else, what people give to these beings defines them. A knowledge of what offerings are appropriate alerts visitors to the deity's place in the religious dichotomy. In Taibei, with its large migrant population, such clues are necessary to a peripatetic worshiper. The modern four-way underpass to a famous and relatively new Taibei temple (Xing Tian Tang) is lined with stalls selling ritual goods. New visitors often ask vendors what offerings are acceptable. There and at other temples fellow worshippers and temple attendants sometimes chide the ignorant for bringing inappropriate offerings. A positive outcome, not theological analysis, is, after all, the purpose of proper identification. The basic distinction in offerings lies in the life-protecting vegetarianism of Buddhists as opposed to the blood sacrifices of popular Dao-

ism. Meats should not be offered in Buddhist temples, though the extremely tolerant style of traditional temples can accommodate mistakes: even Buddhas have guardians and soldiers who will eat meat offerings.

Other practices also distinguish Buddhist from Daoist deities. Celibacy is associated with Buddhism, marriage and esoteric sexual potency with Daoism. A more significant marker for ordinary temple worshippers, most of whom are female, is the behavior expected of menstruating women. These should avoid the presence of Daoist gods, whom their pollution offends, but need not avoid Buddhist ones.

An "indigenous/foreign" dichotomy also distinguishes Daoist beings from Buddhist ones. In discussing differences between *shen* and *fo*, informants often volunteer that Buddhism is historically a religion from India, while Daoism is indigenous. Their familiarity with these facts may owe something to school-taught nationalism, but the information is well integrated into folk history through theatrical performances and popular literature. Foreignness still flavors Buddhism with long, meaningless, transliterated names of the Buddha and in the greeting of monks and nuns — *Omitofo* — which is often caricatured in jokes and popular drama, the Chinese equivalent of "mumbo-jumbo." By contrast, Daoist ritual specialists — and gods, when they speak through mediums — are repositories of a greatly admired literary Taiwanese. Much is made by Daoist specialists of their fluency in reading memorials in this archaic dialect, and those who have paid for the reading take pride in its near-unintelligible authenticity.

The Buddhist/Daoist distinction made in popular ritual presents a high degree of internal consistency and coherence, suggesting that *shen* and *fo* represent two kinds of "real world" social experience. Following Wolf, *shen* in its broad sense ("gods" in general) can be equated with social authority beyond the kinship level. But while Daoist gods are very much like ordinary Taiwanese, Buddhist ones carry a different culture. *Shen* love meat, as do ordinary people; *fo* reject the most favored foods, reversing the value scale in common use. Daoist gods and their ritual specialists may be married, and the gods expect the culturally normal pollution tabus to apply in their presence. Buddhist gods and their attendants are celibate and seemingly beyond concern for menstrual taboos. *Shen* are native; *fo* are alien. What social realities do the familiar, Taiwanese-like *shen* and the foreign *fo* represent?

I suggest that in the imperial period the mass of common people made use of what they knew of the two scriptural traditions to symbolize the two kinds of nonkin authorities which held power in their world. The first were the local landlords/merchants. These were separated from poorer folk by differences of petty-capitalist class but shared with them some commonalities of language or dialect, food habits, and other customs; were linked to them by attenuated ties of kinship; and were therefore relatively approachable as patrons. The second was the metropolitan official, a stranger to the area by bureaucratic tradition, forbidden

to marry in the province of his post, alien in customs and probably in language. Perhaps no more influential for a commoner's purposes than a member of the landlord/merchant "gentry," officials were difficult of access as bearers of both a class and a regional culture that differed from a commoner's own. Though the formal social status of officials was higher, a concrete Chinese with a real-life problem might be vexed in deciding which category of social authority was actually more powerful.

Taiwan's historical remoteness from tributary authority — so that there were few and relatively weak members of the ruling class — and the preeminence there of relatively uncontrolled petty capitalism, along with the merchant/landlords who benefited from it, perhaps explain why Taiwanese, unlike many mainland Chinese, historically have called the gods collectively *shen* rather than *fo* or *pusa*.

The folk representation of gods as either Buddhist or Daoist, while often quite unhistorical, draws attention in direct ways to similarities between the two categories of powerful strangers who, unlike ghosts, were not to be despised and disregarded. In the popular maintenance of a Buddhist-Daoist distinction we see a model of the same class complexity labeled academically as "China's gentry." From the commoner's viewpoint, Buddhist and Daoist deities were different, and in fairly transparent ways, just as sitting officials differed from rankless but still rich and mighty petty capitalists. Ultimately, however, they were the same in their power over those with no rank and little money.

In Taiwan, the Buddhist-Daoist cosmological dualism has been reinforced by the political changes of the past eighty years: the incursions first of the Japanese and later of the Nationalists, whose more conspicuous officials have not been Taiwanese. Social and political power emanated from two culturally differing sources — a Taiwanese upper class and a Japanese or Nationalist officialdom. Although political representation and class accommodation slowly led to the inclusion of more Taiwanese in government, the old cosmology persists in shaping popular interpretations of the structure of authority. In many parts of China, the powerful presence of central authorities, usually from distant regions and often living in postrevolution and hence segregated housing, is felt as an alien parallel to that of local notables — though these have only recently become petty capitalists again.

#### THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE UNDERWORLD

Wolf's homology of gods, ghosts, and ancestors to socially significant categories is full of references to economic relationships. These offer evidence for a more political-economic interpretation than his is, yet is consistent with his initial statement of their socially conditioned polysemy.

The Chinese insistently tell us not only that the world of supernaturals is just like our own but also that the two are closely integrated: living people, gods,

souls, and goods travel back and forth between the two, with much mutual influence. Attending to that insistence is important, so we should search for evidence of the political-economic structure of the other world.

As soon as we do, the obvious is revealed. The supernatural world is a world unsupported by a material base. Supernaturals eat, need clothing and housing, have debts to pay — or they lack these things, and are consequently hostile — but they cannot supply them without outside help. The tribute of food, clothing, and money which supports the other world comes from this world, from the work of living people. Like ghosts, both gods and ancestors are portrayed as dependents rather than as the creator-supplier-maintainers that rulers and parents claim themselves to be. What, and who, is powerful (and moral) is highly ambiguous.

The simplest transactions with spirits are the regular domestic offerings to ancestors. These, in the form of normal meals, are simply the continuation after death of the obligation to support parents. This is an absolute obligation; neglect is supposedly followed by ancestral punishment (Wolf 1974b:163–67; Li Yi-yuan 1976:334); imputations of neglect can be avoided sometimes only through gruesome acts of self-sacrifice, such as the use of a child's flesh to medicate a sick parent (Chaves 1986:418–26). Ancestors will naturally attempt to aid their descendants, if only in their own interests, but their power is not actually very great, Wolf notes. Also, "A person's ancestors are his parents and grandparents, and parents and grandparents have no obligation to heed every request of a child or grandchild," although Wolf allows that in rare cases persistently hostile-seeming ancestors may be forsworn (1974b:167–68, 161).

One does not import the discourse of the market into dealings with ancestors. Ancestors are not usually asked to help in money matters ("You go to a wealth god for that, or some very powerful god," informants told me).<sup>7</sup> Their intervention is more likely to be sought for a generalized stability and absence of trouble for the household. When seeking a special favor from an ancestor, the descendant need not make an offering then and there, for senior kinsmen are under a general obligation to heed the requests of their juniors, just as juniors are under a general obligation to provide comfort and support for their seniors" (Wolf 1974b:168). This is a tributary relationship, pure and simple.

7. Geomancy appears to contradict the idea that ancestors are not asked to grant wealth, for correctly sited ancestral tombs are believed to be potent channelers of wealth to the family that erects them. But, as Freedman has said, "By geomancy . . . men use their ancestors as media for the attainment of worldly desires. And in doing so they have ceased to worship them and begun to use them as things" (1967:38). Good fortune from successful geomancy does not come from ancestral volition, but rather from the mystical engineering of the geomancer who taps into the natural forces of the universe. Geomancers sell their skills to whoever pays them. The popular assumption is that, as in hiring a plumber, you get what you pay for. None of these dealings bears on the relationship between ancestors and descendants.

While real-world bureaucrats propagandized themselves as "father-mother officials," the parents of the people, real-world human beings do not ritually treat otherworld bureaucrats like ancestors. The transactions human beings have with gods are more complex, exhibiting both tributary and petty-capitalist behaviors. Villages, city neighborhoods, sometimes entire towns hold festivals annually for each principal community god — Tudi Gong (the "Earth God") or some local patron of higher rank. People residing in the administrative unit over which the god has control should participate in the celebration. People who choose not to avail themselves of the god's protection could, perhaps, refuse this obligation. Wolf observes that the worship of gods, unlike that of ancestors, was voluntary: "People ordinarily worship the god under whose jurisdiction they live because worship is often a community activity and because it is prudent to maintain good relations with such powerful figures, but it is clear that the average man does not feel morally obligated to make offerings to any god" (1974b:160). Wolf is focusing on individuals. In community ritual, however, the payment of very modest money contributions levied on each member of every household is a near-essential community duty; this is very evident in Taiwan. The amounts are deliberately set low so that only real poverty prevents participation. Similarly, in distant Shandong, a man who refused to pay his share was brought before the magistrate by his fellow villagers, where he admitted that he had been wrong (Johnson 1910:157). Households benefited from the protection implied by inclusion, and neighborhoods benefited by the reassertion of themselves as true, solidary communities to visitors who paused to scan the careful accounting posted on the temple wall.

People also relate to gods at times of their own choosing by visiting temples to ask favors. For some Taiwanese, temple-going is a constant preoccupation; many others never visit temples. Most people go to ask for a specific favor, and when someone does so, Wolf writes,

he negotiates for [the god's] good will just as he would in attempting to secure a favor from a magistrate or a policeman. He makes a small sacrifice and promises a larger one if the god will grant his petition. If divination reveals that the god is not inclined to grant the petition, he then promises a more substantial gift, repeating the process until the god finally agrees. The god is always treated with all the courtesy owed someone of such high status, but the larger gift is not produced until after the desired outcome has been obtained. Having promised a pig's head if a child's illness is cured or the price of pork raised, a person does not actually sacrifice the pig's head until the child has recovered or he has sold his pigs at a profit. (1974b:162)

One worshiper at least even advised a god to advertise a bit: "Every day I said to the god, 'You are a god with great ability, so why do you sit here and say nothing? You ought to show what you can do and let people here know what kind of a god

you are. It is because you don't show what you can do that people all go elsewhere to worship. If you would do something to make your ability known, the people would all come here to worship' " (160).

"Offerings" to gods represent two different transactions. The small community charge at a festival is very much like a tax, owed by residents to a political superior, and not negotiable. The payer gains a highly generalized "protection" from this payment, but when something unpleasant happens anyway, no one is much surprised that the collective protection proved feeble. Serious problems require a different kind of assistance. The "worshiper" approaches a god and haggles over the price of the commodity/favor in fine petty-capitalist style. Sometimes the Chinese give their gods tribute, but they also treat them as official franchise holders of scarce goods for sale to the highest bidder. Like a passenger on Taiwan's earliest railroad, the petitioner tries to pay as little as possible for what she wants to purchase, seals the deal with a down payment, and pays up only when she gets what she has been promised. Wolf's god/political authority parallel expands under examination to emphasize the dual economic possibilities inherent in relationships to class superiors.

And what of ghosts? Ghosts are sometimes treated with charity, fed and clothed and supplied with pocket money in a spirit of compassion. They are generally seen, however, not as pitiable and helpless so much as vengeful and rapacious. Wolf notes, "The more powerful among them roam the countryside like so many bandits." People make offerings to them "So that they will go away and leave you alone." They are like beggars, and "a beggar's request for alms is not really begging. It is a threat" (1974b:170, 171). Ghosts run a protection racket. Their demands are not negotiable; you may get nothing if you give to them, but you will certainly get trouble if you don't.

Wolf argues convincingly that, as strangers, ghosts are merged with archetypal "others" who lurk outside the safe circle of kinship. But there is more to these devious ghosts. People stress their despised status but engage with them in transactions that look more like tribute than like buying and selling. They are wonderfully ambiguous, for one person's ancestor is another's ghost. And, very curiously, the imitation "spirit money" offered to them — *hok kim* and *gua kim* — is identical to that given to Tudi Gong and to the retainers — low-ranking secretaries and soldiers — of Tian Gong, the highest god of all (1974b:173-74, 180).

Let us begin with the last of these peculiarities of ghostly status. Wolf says, and my own experience confirms, that in the popular view "the modern policeman, the traditional yamen runner, the bandit, the beggar, and the ghost all belong to the same category. 'You have to give them something so they will go away and not cause trouble' " (179). Of the beings grouped with ghosts as recipients of *hok kim* and *gua kim*, only Tudi Gong is virtuous. Or is he? Not at all: Tudi Gong, Wolf says, "is like a policeman who wears a uniform. He can only report to lower gods

like the Ch'eng Huang." Tudi Gong has two functions, "to police the [ghosts]" and "to spy on the affairs of his human charges, keep records of their activities, and report regularly to his superiors" (1974b:139, 134).

It is counterintuitive for Tudi Gong to be lumped with the universally feared and despised ghosts. Iconographically, he is the very model of a sweet old "father-mother official," and his temples are often inscribed with the words "Fortunate, Virtuous, Upright God" — a trifle fulsome even by popular Chinese standards. I have never heard a word against Tudi Gong. Yet Wolf is quite right that this lowest ranker in the heavenly hierarchy is a policeman, an official's dangerous and interfering underling, and a spy. The same can be said for Cao Shen, the stove god who is the spiritual informer every household harbors: he reports at the end of lunar New Year on the family's misdeeds and thus must have his mouth closed with good food before he goes. Cao Shen got his unpleasant little job after suiciding to end a life of poverty, bad luck, and having to sell his wife (Eberhard 1965a:194–95). Suicides, as all know, make dreadful ghosts.

Yet one could never *call* Tudi Gong a ghost. Dangerous, impossible, perhaps unthinkable to imagine sweet, sneaky old Tudi Gong (or, god forbid, Tian Gong himself) as a bandit. What gives this pillar of his community his Reaganesque ability to shed dirt? Two possibilities, neither excluding the other, suggest themselves. One of the best kinds of tribute to offer dangerous ghosts is housing. Building a shrine to shelter a ghost or god locates it in space, pins it down, just as ancestors are pinned down by being ritually located in ancestral tablets that are their "seats." Serious ritual precautions must be taken when supernaturals leave their shelters, as for processions at annual festivals, to protect people from their potential anger. People in Taipei pointed out that it is the same with the police: if they are out nosing around, bad things happen. If they stay in the police station, you can drop in every now and again to report things or invite them to a feast.<sup>8</sup> The relationship is still there, but, as long as they remain in their offices, people have some control. In the case of supernaturals, "We make temples beautiful so that the gods will be happy staying inside," an old temple builder informed me.

Tudi Gong, analog of the fearsome yamen-runner, is popularly promoted, in effect, from a mobile and troublesome bully to a respectable official when people build him an office. He is, after all, the quintessential god of the locality. Immobilized by elaborate etiquette and concealing architecture, he is pushed into passivity by his subordinates. As so commonly happens in Chinese life, the forms of respect and control are cleverly manipulated to give a modicum of control to those who in theory are controlled (H. Rohsenow 1973:167–69; Ahern 1981).

8. Intriguingly, a Qing bureaucratic regulation obliged many officials to remain in their yamens during their tenure of office (Ball 1982:310).

A second and more general explanation can be offered for why Tudi Gong is not described plainly as a ghost, despite the threatening policeman-like position that ritual details accord him. Tudi Gong is subject to the same limitation that makes it so hard for a person to admit that *her* mother might be "ghost" to someone else. By analogy with what one of Wolf's informants said about ancestors: "How could Tudi Gong be a ghost? Gods are protectors and help you. Ghosts make you sick and cause trouble."<sup>9</sup> Tudi Gong works for the government. By definition, he does good things: read the inscription.

Even ghosts don't like to be called ghosts, Wolf's informants said: "They would be angry if you called them ghosts. Calling a ghost kui is like calling a beggar 'beggar'" (1974b:171).<sup>10</sup> This does not mean, however, that they are *not* ghosts, for *gui* is a slippery category. Some ghosts — *gui* — are also other people's ancestors — *shen*. *Shen* means both "god" and "ancestor." Ghosts can be gods. Sometimes, Wolf notes, ghosts are offered the same "three kinds" of whole meat offerings as gods. All demand nonnegotiable tribute-like offerings, on threat of either punishment or withdrawal of "protection." It would be very dangerous to say so, however, though peccadilloes irrelevant to class relations can be enshrined in folklore (Wolf 1974b:178, 145).

Gods are (like) ghosts. Government officials are (like) rapacious bandits. Hierarchs, heavenly and mundane, seize goods in return for promises of protection, though real protection must be bought separately, in another sort of transaction. Ghosts represent not only a lumpenproletariat, but the Lord of Heaven — or at least his well-organized henchmen. In 1924, Florence Ayscough wrote that Cheng Huang, the urban deity who parallels a magistrate in his yamen, was associated with grotesque, ghostly beings portrayed by participants in popular processions in his honor. The same was true for the City God of Anjing, Anhui (Shryock 1931). Both the rectitude of men who came to hold positions as otherworldly magistrates and their low taste in associates were stressed for this god. Even the epitome of compassion, Guanyin, appears at universal salvation rituals as a ferocious, blue-faced, male deity, Ta Shih Yeh (see Sangren 1987:139–40, 154–56), sometimes merged with Yama, the chief god of the hellish underworld. The kindest of gods has a threatening aspect.

What does the ritual practice of ordinary people tell us (and them) about gods, ghosts, and ancestors? Whether clearly articulated or not — and I think the

9. Wolf's informant's actual sentence was "How could your ancestors be ghosts? Your ancestors are your own people and help you. Ghosts make you sick and cause trouble" (1974b:173).

10. Euphemizing is the most popular of Chinese rhetorical turns. Even among themselves, the unclarity that this habit — born of caution — produces are sometimes called into question. Mao Zedong, attempting a clear description of various occupations in his 1930 social survey of Xunwu County, notes parenthetically that "when Xunwu people want to say that the tailor steals the fabric . . . they say his scissors are sharp" (1990:93).

beliefs expressed by Taiwanese do articulate them — the folk vision of the other world that is “just like” our world clearly specifies the nature of economic transfers and the categories of social persons who engage in them. These, I believe, reveal that Chinese commoners held a much less positive view of their social world than is supposed by Daniel Overmeyer and many others. He argues that schools, lectures, and popular religious tracts “caused originally elite values to permeate popular consciousness. All of these factors led to an increased sense of cultural unity despite social differences, which were understood to be a part of the natural order of things” (1984:2–3). I read folk practice very differently.

Unlike these folk practices, official rituals performed by bureaucrats engage humans with gods in purely tributary exchanges in the primitive form of usable goods: deities who are worshiped in state ceremonies received consumables, often presented in whole forms, such as a whole ox or sheep or full bolts of silk. In these elaborate rites, there is no hint of haggling, only constant stress on the submissiveness of the human participants to the expectations of the supernaturals, and on the participants’ “purity” and “emptiness” (Zito 1987:351); demands for reciprocity are absent. Most interaction of commoners with gods and ghosts, however, is petty-capitalist bargaining. People do not see this as corruption, I think, for in the face of the gods’/ghosts’ ruler/banditlike capacity to demand tribute, when people receive something in return for their offerings, the exchange seems moral.

#### MONEY FOR THE GODS

The near-universal penetration of the ritual sphere by petty-capitalist values is plainly expressed in the extremely positive view taken of money, and of its use as something very like capital.<sup>11</sup> Money imagery permeates every sphere of Chinese life. A Sichuanese telegrapher observed at the turn of the century that he had “spent [12 pounds] learning English, and therewith bought five thousand words” (Mrs. A. Little [1898]:184). Money appears in popular ceremony in innumerable ways: abstractly, as in the prominently posted lists of contributions to opera performances and temple-building funds; and concretely, as money changes hands in temples to pay for incense and ritual services, and in the form of actual coinage used as ritual items. One is most likely to petition Daoist gods, or *shen*, to make money; Buddhist *fo* (like ancestors) are primarily responsible for family well-being and tranquility (*ping’an*). In the old days, said elderly Taiwan informants, one ideally gave land to temples designated as *yan* or *si* (Buddhist) but gave money to *miao* (Daoist).

Not surprisingly, the ritual use of money has long been associated with marriage and fertility. Han dynasty “spring coins” — rectangular, with auspicious

words on one side and a god and goddess copulating on the other, were thought to disperse evil in the household when given to a bride and groom on their wedding night. In the Song, round “bedcurtain spreading coins” depicting various sexual positions were an integral part of the dowry, decorating the bridal bed (Chou 1971:181). In the nineteenth century, coinage was used on bridal beds in Xiamen (Doolittle 1966, 1:76–77); in Guangzhou, Gray saw the populace throw money onto the beds of the City God and his wife at festivals (1875:433) and hang cash on orange trees in bridal processions (1878, 1:202).

Money is an alchemist’s stone that transforms one commodity into another through the act of purchase. It represents in straightforward fashion the exchange of properties in the market. In a capitalist context, money — as Marx observes — “reproduces itself” like a living being, as invested capital produces profit. It is thus easily fetishized — perceived as an active entity, as among the peasants of Colombia (Taussig 1975) and the readers of the *Wall Street Journal*. In some parts of China, sprinkling coins with bat’s blood may induce the coins to return to the person who spent them (Alexeev 1928:31).

To commoners, money is not contaminating, dirty, or evil. Indeed, money purifies. In contemporary Taiwan, packets of spirit money serve as insulators between spiritually charged objects (such as sacred images) and the table or floor on which they stand and as decorations for sacrificial pigs. When people move gods from private to public altars they burn “spirit money” to remove or avert pollution. Seventy years ago potential bad consequences of a child’s inauspicious words were avoided if one rubbed the child’s mouth with spirit money (Bredon and Mitrophanow 1972:115). Its purificatory effect was dramatized in a small political ritual from late-nineteenth-century Sichuan. A man accused of stealing a child paraded from shrine to shrine, “with a white calico placard pasted on to his coat behind, attesting his innocence, his pigtail hanging unplaited, and wearing a crown of coarse paper cash, with long streamers of paper cash hanging from it. . . . A man went before him with a gong, shouting out the whole story” (Mrs. A. Little [1898]:184–85).

Money in China has also been closely associated with the transformations of death (Naquin 1988; J. Watson 1988:114–15); as charms or amulets against evil spirits, or for communication with the dead (Doolittle 1966, 2:145; 1, 174, 177–78). A corpse asked to approve of its funeral arrangements responded by letting fall from its sleeve coins previously placed there. Water for washing corpses was “bought” from a nearby river in Guangzhou (Douglas 1887:320, 319); this custom is still followed in many parts of Fujian today. Contemporary Taiwan geomancers scatter coins on graves to encourage family fertility. The altars at a ceremony performed annually by Fuzhou migrants to Taipei for the souls of their unknown dead function as banks in the transmission of wealth, including money, to the other world. Money is a wonderfully convenient symbolic connector for the strong relationship between death and fertility in Chinese culture (Watson and Rawski 1988).

11. Some of these arguments are included in Gates 1987a.

The conspicuous use of money in funeral and death-related ceremonies derives from a belief in the important supernatural transactions between people and gods believed responsible for each person's incarnation and fate. These transactions present models of, and for, human behavior which imply that the creation of human life itself depends on capitalist-like principles.

According to my informants and Hou Ching-Lang (1975:35), a soul in the supernatural realm seeks rebirth. First, however, it must obtain a body and a fate through which to pursue its karmic course. To do so, it must contract a mystical debt that will encumber its reincarnated life: one of a dozen celestial treasuries, each with its governing official, advances a loan to the spirit. Part of the money is used to purchase a body for reincarnation; the rest defrays the cost of the individual's future lot in life. A generous loan can purchase a happy and comfortable fate, while a person with a small loan must live with correspondingly straitened means. During life, one should strive to reduce the debt through the performance of virtuous acts, through prayers (one Buddhist sutra cited by Hou gives equivalencies between sutra recitations and cash values) (1975:48), and through donations of money to the gods, both as burned spirit money and as gifts of real value to temples.

A person never completely repays the debt. At her funeral, relatives must pay off the account by burning great sums of spirit money if the spirit is to enter unencumbered into a new and presumably more fortunate incarnation. This "Ceremony of the Reimbursement of the Debt" requires the burning of specific sums of spirit money, and the making out and sending (by burning) of duplicate copies of a contract of fulfillment of obligation, one to the appropriate treasury officer, and the other to the spirit herself, presumably for her records.<sup>12</sup> A seal, stamped half on each copy, assures verifiability. The burning of paper spirit money automatically multiplies its quantity in the other world, so that more is repaid than was originally borrowed. Additional sums are burned for the use of the spirit during her stay in the other world, for various subofficials, to smooth the way, and sometimes to clear up the possibly uncanceled debts of other ancestors who might be in need of such assistance. "Sending a bit more is a good idea; the gods expect it," said one informant.

Although repaying this debt is the basic motivator for the offering of spirit money to the gods throughout life and for burning large quantities of it at folk

12. Information — "memorials" — as well as cash can be transmitted from the mundane to the unearthly world by burning, and some Chinese interpret spirit money as memorials (Wolf 1974b:181) rather than filthy lucre. I believe that this view represents an attempt to bring folk practice into line with the supposedly higher morality of tributary ritual, which emphasizes use values and downplays commodities. Status climbing by popular ritual specialists denatures spirit money from real, spendable, interest-bearing *cash* to "petitions." That specialists attempting to claim close relationship with authorities in the spirit world should take this view, while laypeople insist that the stuff is just like money, accords well with my proposal of the existence of two models of political economic transactions.

funerals, other ritual complexities employing spirit money are possible. A person who has had extraordinarily bad fortune may invite a specialist to perform a ceremony to change fate, in which eerie little paper figures of astrological significance are burned along with spirit money. Hou describes the ceremony the "Restoration of Destiny," often performed after a stretch of extraordinarily good luck, which is assumed to have drawn too extensively on the debt-based account. The account might then become exhausted and its holder die prematurely. In another rite, the supplicant applies for an augmentation of her loan (1975:78, 99).

In Xiamen (Amoy) in the late nineteenth century, under conditions of less-thoroughgoing capitalist penetration of folk life than in present-day Taiwan, J. J. M. de Groot observed a somewhat different version of the paying-off-the-debt ceremony. During the obsequies, kin entrust a special kind of low-denomination "treasury money" (*kho ci*: [Taiwanese]) "to the appropriate treasury officer who, with eleven others form a set of spirits who devote themselves exclusively to this sort of work, not merely for the benefit of the dead, but also for the sake of their own purse, as the management of other people's money matters is, both in terrestrial and subterranean China, a business that pays well" (1969, 1:78–79). The twelve treasury officers represent the twelve astrological animals; it is clear which officer should be invoked. A Daoist calls the spirit into a paper representation, identifies the recipient, and burns spirit money, paper ingots, and the appropriate sum of treasury money.

The treasury money plays a very prominent part in this remittance of precious metal and cash money to the other world. . . . It is . . . designed for enabling the soul to liquidate its old debts there, which it cannot properly do without a large quantity of small coin.

. . . . The prevailing popular notions ascribe every case of birth upon this earth to the release of a soul from Hades, which redemption is, however, never granted unless a heavy ransom is paid by the soul itself to Yama and his underlings. . . . [N]early all of them have to borrow from their fellow [spirits], if they desire to be re-incarnated on earth. . . . The soul, returning now to Hades, will consequently at once be assailed there by a host of creditors, who are all anxious to collect the funds necessary for their own release. . . . [T]he small coin [which the boxes of treasury money] contain will help the soul to settle its accounts more quickly, and thus enable it to rid itself of its dunners in less time; moreover, it saves it the troublesome work of changing the bullion and keeps it out of the clutches of money-changers, who, in the Chinese hell no less than in the Chinese empire, never feel any qualms of conscience. . . . [T]he quantity of treasury money required by a dead man . . . stands in immediate relationship to the year of his birth. [1:80]

The amounts required for each astrological year are posted in shops that sell spirit money, but "very dutiful mourners" send odd-numbered multiples of the minimum.

From his observations in central China in the later nineteenth century, Doré describes two versions of this complex. In the less common, less monetized, and perhaps older version, mourners purchased paper printed with images of public granaries and state treasuries, which were burned with prayers to their guardians for their generosity to the soul of the deceased. In the more popular version, mourners filled chests with paper money and paper silver ingots, sealed the chests with the date and name of the recipient, and brought them to the temple of the City God. They were "deposited like capital" in the god's bank, producing interest for the account holder (1970:58-59).

Spirit money not only represents earthly money, but its production was and is an important source of income in many regions of China (e.g. western Fujian, a major paper-producing area). It is both symbol and reality. Sometimes, however, the money was purely imaginary, and "producing" it provided income for many women. A 1917 observer describes how, in Chaozhou, vegetarian "fasting grandmothers" recited sutras to earn supernatural money in the other world to save themselves or others from the torments of hell. So many recitals made up 100 copper cash, so many rosaries count as 1000. The "Spirit Cong-Guing is responsible for the management of these women's affairs. . . . To him they offer the merit-money [earned in prayer — H.G.] . . . ; and as he receives it from them, he passes it on to the spirit Hu-Sa, who, when they arrive in Hades, will give each one her own, but until they arrive, he places it all in Spirit Chong's bank, where, under the skilful conduct of accountant Spirit Li, it accumulates merit-interest." Such women were also paid by others to make merit-money for them, "so the poor amongst them are almost self-supporting, instead of helplessly dependant on a begrudged living, with their own descendants" (Darley 1917:161, 159). In Zhejiang in the 1930s, Clarence Burton Day saw a similar scene in a Wealth God temple.

Many women, however, were hired to produce paper spirit money. In 1940, women were paid seven cents a day to make nine hundred sheets (4½ by 6 inches). Sometimes, pragmatically, kinswomen of a dead person made spirit money themselves to avoid buying it. "Thus economizing, they felt able to give a correspondingly greater amount to be burned for the Hades bank account of the dependent mother, and by this good deed thereby store up future merit for themselves" (1969:24, 30).

The making of spirit money was concentrated in regions of China where appropriate fibers were cheap: bagasse in Taiwan, where one could see petty-capitalist hand production through a putting-out system in the streets of Dansui into the 1970s; bamboo in western Fujian, where, until the 1950s, rural folk made their living carrying 80-to-200-pound packages of mountain-made paper to the Jiu-

long River for printing in port cities and eventual export to southeast Asia and — now again — to Taiwan; bamboo in Sichuan, where spirit money handmade from local papers reappeared for sale in the 1980s outside popular temples.

#### THE MORALITY OF MONEY

The offering of spirit money has often been caught by observers in moments of historical change. Hou describes the diffusion of an "occidental" style of money to Taiwan through more sophisticated Shanghai merchants after 1949 (1975:16-17); I found that Taiwan Mainlanders from north China, where petty capitalism was always weak, still prefer to burn imitation silver ingots rather than either traditional or "occidental-style" paper money.

De Groot's version of spirit mortgages differs from more recent ones in the relative simplicity of its financial arrangements, with its debtor's prison for souls and its highly personal basis for the original debt, while Doré's hints at a shift from the use of money to placate political power to its use in a capitalist way, to draw interest. Hou's version, which my Taipei informants support, assumes a highly institutionalized financial system, a celestial central bank. In it, we see the human body, the length of its life, and the quality of that life equated to specific sums of money — as extreme an example of the penetration of a money economy into human existence as metaphor can express.

What do such transactions tell the Taiwanese about themselves and their economy? It is hard to resist standing Weber on his head for a "Daoism and the spirit of Chinese capitalism" view of the connections among the folk belief in Original Debt, popular ideals of righteous conduct, and petty-capitalist economic practice. Simply staying in an owner-operator business, let alone prospering and expanding, depends on credit-worthiness and on trust that others will fulfill their obligations. Now, as always, people of Taiwan's lower classes do not look to the law and the state to enforce contracts. Saso (1982:185-86) identifies the Confucian virtue of *yi* with reciprocity among friends and business associates, arguing that the worship of gods expresses the social value of these important relationships. That the gods are concerned with honesty and uprightness in human transactions, and reward these with prosperity, is a commonplace among small-business people and craft workers. Paying one's debts, an essential obligation on earth, becomes elevated through ritual to a kind of sacrament in heaven, an act of personal salvation.

I am interested, however, not just in money per se but in money used like capital, and in the extent to which these ritual uses reflect and encourage capitalist-like relations. Marx distinguishes clearly between money that acts simply as a medium of circulation or a measure of value, the "universal material representative of wealth" (1973:216), on the one hand, and as capital, on the other. Money in precapitalist class societies, through its use as a medium of exchange and mea-

sure of value, became, in Marx's words, "the embodied form of wealth, in contrast to all the substances of which wealth consists." "From its servile role, in which it appears as mere medium of circulation, it suddenly changes into the lord and god of the world of commodities, while they represent its earthly form." As complex precapitalist societies monetarized their economies, money became "the god among commodities" (221). Chinese proverbs express similar imagery: "Ten ounces of silver gets through to the gods; one hundred ounces gets through to Heaven itself" (in Plopper 1969:168); "The Earth God runs a bank; money opens the way to the gods" (in J. Rohsenow 1991:234).

Historically, perhaps, ritual offerings of consumable commodities, foodstuffs, and silk gave way to gold and its symbolic representations, and then to paper symbols much like those still in use. Sacrifices made in the state cult, which supported the anticapitalist tributary mode of production, included only consumable commodities — never money (Edkins 1878:18–38). "The idea of a sacrifice in them is that of a banquet" (23). While de Groot cites sources placing the transition to paper spirit money as early as the third and fourth centuries, with the offering of money taking nearly its present form by the seventh century (1969, 1:713–14), Hou plausibly argues that the shift took place in conjunction with the great Song urbanization of the twelfth century, which so expanded the use of money in China, and with the growth of traditional banking and of paper banknotes. He comments that a text of this period, intended to be recited before divinities and still in use at present, contains elements of "a religion of unknown origin which is totally founded on wealth" — unlike previous Daoist tradition (1975:35–36). I seriously doubt that the version of the debt rituals current in Taiwan date from the Song; the existence of a less fully capitalist form in Xiamen in the nineteenth century, and an awareness of the plastic nature of folk ideologies in response to cultural change would argue against such a direct line of descent. That the offering of commodities shifted to the offering of money, and then imitations of money, appears historically valid, however.

But is this money capital, or its petty-capitalist analogue? Can it be seen as a means to the production of more money, through capital's capacity for "exchanging itself for labour power, by calling wage labour to life" (Marx and Engels 1962:92)? In the contemporary Taiwan rituals relating to a soul's supernatural debt we can see sketched out, for us and for the Chinese bearers of tradition, Marx's classic distinction "between the circulation of money as capital, and its circulation as mere money" (Marx 1977:250).

Marx sums up this distinction in two simple formulas. The first — mere money, or money as a medium of exchange — is C-M-C, denoting the selling of a commodity, C, for money, M, which is then used to purchase a further commodity, C, to be consumed. Here, money simply facilitates the transfer of two commodities of equal value. By contrast, M-C-M denotes the use of money to purchase a commodity, which is resold for money. Money has circulated and re-

turned to its original owner, perhaps in a larger amount, to be recirculated. "In the case of interest-bearing capital, the circulation M-C-M presents itself in abridged form . . . as M-M', i.e., money which is worth more money, value which is greater than itself" (1977:257). "It has acquired the occult ability to add value to itself. It brings forth living offspring, or at least lays golden eggs" (1973:255).

Are these not the transactions in which Chinese gods and people engage and that conclude in the payment of the debt? For human beings, money is a medium by which they exchange part of the fruits of their life's labor for the most essential of "commodities" — a human body and life fate — both of which when consumed, cease to be. Gods, by contrast, lay out money as interest-bearing capital that expands through the labor natural to a human life. Gods expect to receive more than they originally lent: a series of offerings over the lifetime of the individual in the course of normal religious activity, and a final repayment that is usually supplemented with extra amounts. This money returns to the celestial treasury to recirculate and expand itself through further capitalist transactions with human souls. Typical humans move endlessly through the cycle of birth and death, debt and repayment. Consumption traps us in the world's red dust.

This last of life's rituals not only teaches the virtue of paying one's debts but also makes explicit the two uses of money, and the consequences of such uses. In religious metaphor, the putting out of money at interest is honored, the ultimate unproductiveness of its use to support consumption is underscored. Gods, wealthy and powerful, perform the one transaction; humans, poor and dependent, the other. When people are admonished to model their behavior on the gods, they are given an economic program that is not separable from a moral one. How this transaction reflects on actual tributary rulers, who give nothing material in return for what they take, is plain to see. From the viewpoint of Third Wang and Fourth Li, the virtuous should truck, barter, and exchange, rather than grab from others or renege on what they owe; and they should be very circumspect about pointing out these strategies.

By focusing on the supernatural hierarchy and on the transactions between this world and the other, we can see clearly the key assumptions Chinese commoners have made about power and class in their communities, and about their two modes of production. The folk distinctions established by anthropologists among gods, ghosts, and ancestors, together with the popular ideology of money as capital, clarify lines of cleavage in the social world between ruler/commoner and propertied/propertyless. They also invert the values the god/ghost/ancestor trichotomy initially implies. Spirits are nonproducing dependents, not providers; investing/producing are good, spending/consuming are only necessities. The Buddhist/Daoist distinction is constantly reinforced by the existence of both official and unofficial sources of wealth and power in a two-mode political economy. In dealing with gods, and also with the ghosts and ancestors with which they are so complexly linked, people accept the hierarchical parameters of a tributary cos-

mos. Yet they valorize petty capitalism not because it is natural for people to create markets but because immediate and concrete exchange between equals accords better with the human taste for autonomy than unequal or imaginary and delayed exchange. They recognize, and even sacralize, the petty-capitalist experience that opens a back door to their own immediate goals. Money subverts the rigid rules of tributary inequality, offers greater distributive justice, and thus glows with a luster brighter than virtue.

The folk ideology of political-economic life directs our attention repeatedly to the double political economy of the real world, where both tributary and petty-capitalist exchanges defined the status and the power of commoners and gave shape to community and ethnic identities. The giving of tribute, while obligatory, also revealed the worth and humanity of the "inferiors" who supplied their superordinates' needs. The systematic symbolic insistence on this point shows that both class and kin subordinates questioned the official ideology that resources, benevolence, life itself flowed from the powerful to the weak. The image of a trickle-down goodness from rulers and kin seniors so persistently purveyed to the populace may have been primarily effective in propping up the authorities' sense of themselves. If we read the evidence of the popular world view as it is plainly and emphatically set forth in folk religion, everyone knew that the welfare of all society rested on the work of household producers. They knew too that the ruling class was neither generous nor moral when they took the concrete and returned only the abstract.

The shifting images of gods, ghosts, and ancestors as bureaucrats, strangers, and kinfolk are, of course, socially constructed. They are also a form of critical theory. This insight belongs to Chinese popular culture, not only to academic discourse. No one says that the Chinese material world is a shadow of another, realer one, as Platonic thinkers do. They say that *it* is like ours.



## Folk Ideologies: Women and Men

T'ang Chu Shih, a Ning-hai [Shandong] widow of the Ming dynasty, became so famous for her virtuous refusals of marriage that she was honoured by the local magistrate with the official presentation of a laudatory scroll bearing the words, "Pure and chaste as frozen snow."

— From a regional gazetteer, 1910

Legend pretends that the origin of [Zhu Xi's] superhuman wisdom was a pearl of great value which a fox-fairy, in the likeness of a beautiful young woman who came to serve him . . . brought as a gift. Yielding to her entreaties, he swallowed the precious jewel [and became wiser than all other mortals]. — Fox-fairy legend

Commoners face rulers with an ideology of power which turns out, on close inspection, to be rather different from the one their rulers try to teach. In parallel fashion, men expect women to be absorptive and uncritical of masculinist lessons, while folk ideologies show women to be more independent-minded than men would like. They also show, however, that the analysis implicit in folk belief stumbles on the intellectual obstacle of sexual differences. Cutting across the socially constructed cosmos of gods, ghosts, ancestors, and living people are phenomena that Chinese firmly place outside of human tinkering, aspects of an absolute, unconstructed nature. Central to these is sex.

Naturalism is always suspect. It conceals not only what we do not yet understand but many things we understand all too clearly and cannot bear to consider, or do not dare to discuss. At the same time, we know we *are* a part of nature. Interpretations of our connection with it are part of all cultural traditions. Chinese naturalism as it is epitomized in sex forms the core of a vision of the cosmos which differs from that organized around a double political economy, but is not incompatible with it.

At the core of P. Steven Sangren's lengthy argument connecting ritual efficacy, legitimacy, and the structure of value is the durable Durkheimian insight that "to legitimate social institutions . . . , magical power must be conceived as emanating from sources outside these institutions" (1987:4). By an extreme naturalization of gender as sex alone, Chinese people concealed from themselves the artificiality of the gender roles that were essential to their political economy: asymmetrical property rights for women and men. Whereas the symbolism of the heavenly bureaucracy argues for a direct popular awareness of the constructed nature of political and economic positions and powers, the symbolism of sex argues that the (inevitable) social construction of gender was not directly apprehended. The concealment of its social aspects, and the exaggeration of its biological ones, resulted in a highly contradictory naturalization of gender.

The sharpness of the gender distinction faced a very considerable intellectual challenge from within Chinese culture. Although they professed a powerful ideological position that women and men are deeply different, Chinese people certainly did not assume that female and male characteristics would naturally emerge in growing children: they had to be taught, and taught hard. My hundreds of interviews of footbound women show that girls had to be made into marriageable women through painful physical change, just as boys had to be beaten into literacy. Most Chinese firmly believed in both the power of and the necessity for forceful education, if only in modesty, embroidery, and pickle-making. Since the Song, the system of political recruitment depended on such a belief. The construction of the good person through *li*, ritual, and other forms of education was a positive obsession in Chinese life. Yet, despite the frequent statements that children must be taught appropriate gender characteristics, despite all the obvious differences in treatment of girls and boys, the differences between them were perceived as natural.

Previous chapters on the treatment of females in kinship, and of women's role in the economy, suggest why the great effort expended in the Chinese cultural construction of gender was determinedly ignored. Who could have borne the moral burden of such discriminatory acts without believing that women, less than true kin, less than fully human, stood beyond the pale of the moral obligations that obtained among men? Without the direct economic exploitation of women, however, petty capitalism and the energy with which it infused tributary circuits would have deflated to near-stasis.

Trapped in this ideological necessity of the powerful men around them, how must women have seen the cosmos? Women's experiences were doubly muffled, doubly dangerous to articulate, compared with those of commoner men. Their opportunities to leave us written records have been fewer, and their actions were of little significance to the Chinese and Westerners who wrote about them. There are, of course, exceptions — on these we must depend for all our information. Caught between the sketchiness of the relatively well-organized documents writ-

ten by outside observers — foreigners and Chinese, historians and ethnographers — and the limitless number of tantalizing fragments of folklore buried in indigenous sources, I make no attempt here to delineate regional patterns in what follows. As in the previous chapter, I try rather to expand what many recent anthropologists have found to be true in Taiwan, where the record is best, and where I have been able to test my ideas with ordinary people, by noting what seem to be universal elements of a popular vision of women. Some of these are well supported by such recent and historically and spatially precise studies as those of Steven Sangren (1983, 1987), J. Watson (1985), Stevan Harrell (1986), and Robert Weller (1986).

Even if the records were better than they are, we could never expect to find a fully expanded counterculture among Chinese women. Not having a coherent, honorable, and just view of self and surroundings is one of the destructive consequences of oppression. Although it is important to document and analyze resistance, subversion, and all the "weapons of the weak" (Scott 1985), the greater power and authority remained with rulers except when rare, revolutionary shifts in dominance occurred. Chinese women, however, have left us hints both of their influence on the popular vision (and sometimes even on the ruling-class vision) and of the ideological positions they took when free to do so (see Teng 1990).

#### WOMEN IN RITUAL

Folklore sometimes captures an individual woman's contribution to local belief. In the early part of this century, in the Shandong town of Rongcheng, a woman attributed her daughter's death to the City God's desire that she become his wife. The district magistrate accepted the evidence and arranged for the young woman's reburial within the temple and the installation of her image beside that of the god. The new goddess came to be venerated as a healer by local women, who left her many small offerings (Johnston 1910:369-71). We may assume that the mother was pleased to have her maiden daughter so well settled in the afterworld and wonder how large a role she played in creating her goddess-daughter's posthumous claims.<sup>1</sup> More commonly, however, we must look to the impersonality of custom to find female influence.

Women were enthusiastic participants in popular public ritual, even in regions where many adult women were normally secluded within the home or the

1. Johnston describes this as a "story" much believed in and acted upon in Rongcheng (Jung-ch'eng). It parallels in many ways a folk story treated by Wolfram Eberhard as an exemplar of a genre of maiden-marries-a-deity tales common in China since the Han (1965a:61-62, 212-13). A principal point of such stories is the relationship a family (usually through the bride's mother) can establish with a powerful being through the death/marriage of their daughter.

confines of the village. A nineteenth-century observer notes that for Shandong festivals "women and girls are allowed the unusual privilege of riding uncovered, on wheelbarrows and sedan-chairs, through the streets" and that they undertook triennial visits to their husbands' families' graves as enjoyable outings (Coltman 1891:60, 109). Some festivals for female gods attracted only women (Gray 1878, 1:382), who could thus attend without improper mingling of the sexes. Folk rituals provided the greatest excuse for women to be out and about, however; some wedding contracts contained clauses specifying how many pilgrimages a year a woman was to be permitted (Mrs. A. Little [1898]:122). Foreign observers have often noted the large numbers of women attending community festivals and other public rituals; Chinese who vilified folk religion as superstition often blamed its persistence on its attractions for women. More evenhandedly, peasants in Jiaomei, Fujian, say "men have ancestral halls, women have temples" (A. Wolf 1980, fieldnotes).

Rituals for levels in the tributary hierarchy (the state, ancestor worship, commoner communities, and even of the domestic stove god) were ideally performed by men. Doubtless many regional variations existed: a north China observer of domestic offerings to the sun comments on the unusual role of women "whose presence is so often forbidden at the offering-table" (Bredon and Mitrophanow 1972:76, 160); Taiwan women performed the day-to-day ancestral worship on domestic altars but yielded to men in lineage halls and on major occasions.

Offerings to some supernaturals, however, could be made only by women. They officiated at domestic worship of the moon on the fifteenth day of the eighth lunar month, and of the Weaving Woman or her star counterpart on the seventh day of the seventh month. These were lighthearted ceremonies, but not minor ones. The moon festival was and is one of China's major popular celebrations, attached in legend to Confucian virtues and thus officially encouraged. Andrea Sankar, drawing on the memories of women who had participated in such events early in this century, describes the festival as sanctifying sisterly relations (1978:23-25). The 7:7 festival in the nineteenth century celebrated needlework, among other things, with embroidery exhibitions, needle-threading-in-the-dark contests, and dainty, rococo food offerings (Gray 1878, 1:261-63). The textile arts were not amusements for bored ladies, but the source of valuable objects for use, tribute, gift, and sale. Additional patronesses of women and needlework<sup>2</sup> are common today — in the north, Mao Gugu (Bredon and Mitrophanow 1972:95); in Tuen Mun, Hong Kong, a female god who still receives needles and hanks of embroidery thread as votive offerings.

These women's festivities were domestic, but women in Taiwan and Fujian took important roles in community ritual as well. In Jiaomei, Fujian, married

daughters were responsible for all (the women's view) or part (the men's view) of the upkeep of village temples, as Arthur Wolf notes:

When a village temple was in need of repair, a meeting was called of all daughters who had married, and the wealthiest among them was asked to serve as head. The others then contributed to the best of their ability, the head making up the short-fall. . . . wealthy families competed for the honor of their daughter-in-law serving as head because the amounts contributed were always posted. . . . the women living in a village did not contribute to the repair of the local temple; their responsibility was to the temples in their natal villages. (1980, fieldnotes)

In Taiwan and the rest of the Chinese world, women still prepare the food for gods and guests and, in many communities, make offerings to gods and ancestors alike. Without their enthusiastic compliance in this highly valued component of festivity, ceremonies would be far less enjoyable and ritually adequate.

Women made good use of the opportunities for autonomy, consumption, and direct access to supernatural power which folk religion offered. Through their massive and long-standing participation, sometimes the form and content of folk ideology were altered. Striking examples are revealed in the inappropriate intrusion of female gods into the heavenly bureaucracy (Sangren 1983; J. Watson 1985). Guanyin and Mazu, imagined as self-sacrificing virgins, became immensely popular in late-imperial times, their cults spreading to many parts of China. Mazu was (and is) a patron of powerful landholding lineages in Guangzhou (Watson 1985), but she was better known for her association with the Fujianese seagoing traders who dispersed her cult. To women, however, she, like Guanyin, was also seen as a compassionate mother. (Mothers care equally for all their children, not obliged as are Confucian fathers to make invidious distinctions among them.) These gods spoke symbolically for equality rather than hierarchy, for mercy rather than "justice," and for women at least as much as for men. After many attempts at suppression, officials promoted these troublesome gods to the heavenly hierarchy: Mazu was first made a Heavenly Concubine, then an Empress; Guanyin was sometimes ranked as a queen. Their temples and rites, with their masses of followers, thus came under at least some official supervision, at the cost of a major anomaly in the official version of popular culture.

James Watson helpfully distinguishes between official and popular, propertied and propertyless, male and female versions of Mazu, showing that she scarcely seemed like the same deity to the different classes and categories of people who conjointly worshiped her. Significantly, "women's conceptions of the goddess did not seem to reflect their own (or their husbands') position in the social hierarchy" (1985:320). While for men and officials, Guanyin and Mazu became icons of social stability through hierarchy, for women, hierarchy was explicitly rejected in favor of universality.

2. And, completeness obliges me to add, of lavatories.

Mazu's and Guanyin's maternalism, compassion, and universality are expressed most directly in their transactions with petitioners. Like all gods, they are believed to *like* to receive offerings and can be seen to receive them in abundance. But women in Taiwan say that approaching them "is like asking your mother for a favor. Mothers give you things just because they love you; they don't need to have presents all the time." This generosity is generally true of female gods who are approached in their own right, not simply as God Such-and-Such's Wife. The goddess most closely associated with actual human motherhood is particularly undemanding. The Lady Who Sends Children, Song Zi Niang Niang (sometimes Zhu Sheng Niang Niang) in Taiwan is an object of constant supplication, but she is not grandly housed or treated. I have never seen her images decked with expensive votive offerings, and never heard of a Taiwan community festival in her honor at which worshipers might be "taxed." As they say of Guanyin and Mazu, women claim that she expects only sincere devotion. In places as distant as Lao Shan in Shandong and Chengdu, Sichuan, women who had asked for a child made a thank-offering of an earthen doll after the birth (Graham 1961:129; Gates 1987b:121). Near Beijing in the 1920s, mothers gave red eggs or shoes to thank Song Zi Niang Niang for a baby born safely. Though Xi Wang Mu's temple in Beijing in the 1920s was crowded with women and children on her annual festival day, it was conspicuously small and unimposing, apparently because worshipers were not motivated, or required, to make material returns for the favors they asked. On Shandong's Tai Shan, a major pilgrimage site, the principal god in the 1920s was Bi Xia Yuan, who received shoes, clay dolls, and cakes, as well as cash, from pilgrims (Bredon and Mitrophanow 1972:281, 481, 231-34). In the 1940s, travelers to Hua Shan in Shanxi photographed an altar drape embroidered with the donor's name (Morrison and Eberhard 1973: pl. 70). All these were almost cost-free gifts: women made shoes themselves out of scraps of cloth, while dozens of red eggs were the customary present made to women after childbirth, to strengthen them. Shoes and eggs, like dolls made of earth, were within most women's means. They contrast with the whole pigs, gold votive plaques, new images, and other substantial gifts that male participants in folk ritual often presented to gods who had a more business-like attitude.

Though even widely worshiped female gods receive little wealth and hold no position in the imperial pantheon, they were sometimes elaborately imagined. The Song Zi Niang Niang of Cantonese women in the nineteenth century had twenty distinct attendants, one with the delightful duty of making children smile. Votaries offered her string, a cheap and simply obtained offering, tied round the necks of the infants the images held (Gray 1878, 1:163-64). In Beijing, nine Niang Niangs with different functions for women and children are described (Bredon and Mitrophanow 1972:281).

Some rituals express expectations of compassion and mutual help among real women. Contemporary Taiwan prostitutes offer small cloth shoes to a col-

lective patron, a group of spirits of girls who died unmarried and whose families have sent their ritually anomalous tablets and ghosts to reside in a Buddhist mortuary house. This collection of unwanted daughter-ghosts seems an appropriate source of sympathy for those prostituted, as women typically are, by their own parents. The women explained that their offerings of children's shoes are a substitute for bound-foot shoes because women in the *yin* world still have bound feet (A. Wolf 1974b:150), but their cheapness is characteristic of women's offerings to sympathetic female gods. In the 1920s, a woman who died in childbirth, a terrible enough event in reality, was punished with bloody torments in the Chinese afterworld. Under bells in many Zhejiang temples, women left paper tablets bearing the names of and prayers for mercy for those who had died this dreadful death (Day 1969:130). Before the revolution, in Shandong and Sichuan, women hoping to bear children took earth dolls left by new mothers at childbirth goddess shrines — a ritual transaction that expresses equality and membership in a common community of women (Sangren 1987:70-71).

This minimal gift-giving reinforced and reasserted the idea that female gods were not greedy. This is not to suggest that the principal female gods had a distaste for money; Guanyin lent money, on kindly terms, at at least one Guangzhou temple (Gray 1875:387), usually to "itinerant hawkers, petty tradesmen, barbers, and persons of such like occupations."<sup>3</sup> A popular epithet for Guanyin was "Bank of Salvation" (Bredon and Mitrophanow 1972:182). Mazu images in Taiwan today are often loaded with gold votive plaques. Names of women donors to temples and celebrations are carved on temple pillars or cast into ritual implements everywhere in China, as Gray observed in the nineteenth century (1875:435, 538, 554). Tudi Mu, spouse of the heavenly policeman Tudi Gong, takes the rap, in some Taiwanese communities, for a rapaciousness that may properly belong to him (Gates 1987b:145). She is an official's wife, and therefore greedy at least by marriage. But female gods' material relationships with their worshipers have been shaped by an economy in which women often have little to give. Women have forced into the pantheon an image of legitimate authority which is not capitalist-minded, hierarchical, or male.

How have Chinese women represented themselves supernaturally such that the representation might assist action in their own behalf? Two themes, sexuality and motherhood (see Cahill 1984, 1986, 1988), offer at least a partial answer.

3. These symbolic "loans," Gray notes, required the security of a slightly larger sum than was borrowed. "On the corresponding day, in the following year, he repairs to this same shrine, to refund, with the addition of a few cash, the amount, which, in the preceding year, he borrowed. The citizens of Canton, who are in the humbler walks of life, consider that they are sure to be fortunate, when trading on a capital, a small portion of which has, in this manner, been borrowed from the goddess Koon-Yam" (Gray 1875:387).

The natural world is epitomized in Chinese popular (and esoteric) thought as the duality of *yin* and *yang*. The singular world, and all in it, is divided into *yin* and *yang*: absolute, uncreated, the nature of nature itself. These two categories, and the two-step/three-step dance of their logic, simply *are*. No one tries to change one for the other, although existing *yangness* and *yinness* can be modulated through action and consumption. *Yin* and *yang* are never formulated as agentive, anthropomorphic gods with whom one can make deals. Philosophers for five thousand years have debated the meaning of this dialectic.<sup>4</sup> To ordinary people, the most salient exemplification of the *yin* and the *yang* is the difference-in-sameness of women and men, both human, but deeply unlike, whose relations center on biological reproduction.

In anthropology, and especially in the anthropology of the 1980s, we were too quickly persuaded to emphasize the bizarre, the exotic, in our subject matter and our explanations. We often paid "more attention to those systems of thought designed to obscure the world . . . than to those systems of thought by which people *know* the world" (Brown 1991:155). By focusing on the female/male-unity/opposition of *yin* and *yang*, I deliberately attach my argument to the most concrete and experiential of the commonest associations of *yin/yang* rather than to a more abstract and all-encompassing meaning, as Steven Sangren (1987) does by attaching his argument to order/disorder. Order/disorder stands several steps removed from life's immediate experiences. More important, it represents the asymmetric management concerns of hegemony rather than the more balanced power relations that folk ideology usually associates with the *yin/yang* metaphor. We yield too quickly to the dominant discourse by beginning with the most highly idealized — and ideologized — face of *yin/yang*.

In explaining the abstraction of *yin/yang*, ordinary Chinese almost always begin with the unity/opposition of female/male. Although most people are far too delicate to say so, the interpenetration of the sexes in intercourse is one of the best metaphors available for the unity of *yin/yang*: moon/sun, dark/light, even ghost/human (or human/god) are iconically feeble by contrast. Discourse on sexuality was not edited out of popular ritual as it was from speech and writing, however. Most temples in Taiwan have a pair of sexed guardian lions, his genitals bulging and often painted bright red; hers, by contrast, are conspicuously concealed. This overt reference to sexuality is defended from the criticism of crudity, and given fuller meaning, by the association of sexuality with animals and the natural, constant themes in Chinese iconography.

4. The question of what *yin* and *yang* mean has prompted a vast literature. A particularly stimulating recent contribution to it is Black 1986.

Simultaneously concealed and criticized as bestial, sexuality was reified directly in at least one popular form. Across the China mainland (I do not know of these in Taiwan), gods known as the Wu Sheng were widely known. In villages around Beijing, their small shrines were common, the gods themselves sometimes taking the form of foxes, badgers, weasels, and other petty vermin. As burrowers in the female earth, they seemed lascivious, for, in V. R. Burkhardt's words, "during the stillness of the night, they overheard the secrets of Mother Earth" (1982, 3:64; see also Watters 1874).

Gray saw a parallel expression of sexuality in the Heilung Tan temple near Beijing. Emperors sometimes officiated at this temple to the Dragon King, giver of rain (1878, 1:148). Rain, dragon, and emperor were all fertilizing *yang* agents, popularly imagined in explicitly sexual ways: when the rain fell, north China peasants stayed indoors to avoid the "indecent" of witnessing heavenly intercourse (Bredon and Mitrophanow 1972:350). Images like those at Heilung Tan were common in north China, representing what Gray describes as "a reverence for the male and female principles of the universe" (1878, 1: 125–26n.1). The Wu Sheng were known in similar form in Guangdong<sup>5</sup> and elsewhere: "Even the Throne was powerless to uproot these very old and well-beloved deities, though time after time protests were made against them, the last not so many years ago when a high official of Chekiang province denounced the Five Seers as workers of evil and authors of a terrible plague" (1878, 1:160). Once a part of Ming emperors' sex education (Mitamura 1970:114–15), they were classed by the Manchus as corrupt gods: early-twentieth-century observers state that "their worship is about the nearest attempt at the deification of sensuality found in China" (Bredon and Mitrophanow 1972:16). Their association with the tributary hierarchy that asserted itself as part of nature is underlined by the oddity that crepuscular foxes, redolent of ambivalence and liminality as they emerged from and entered the earth and changed into human form, were also strongly associated with yamens, where they protected official seals and received regular worship from mandarins (Doolittle 1966, 1:357, 288).

Female sexuality was portrayed as dangerous to women themselves and to others.<sup>6</sup> The Wu Sheng appeared to girls and women, "assuming strange forms

5. The small brass figures of men and women, birds and beasts seen in a temple not far from Beijing by John Bell, who traveled there in 1719–22, may also have represented the Wu Sheng. Dr. Bell was also unnecessarily discreet about details (1965:123).

6. A rare anecdote about female sexuality in real life was recorded by a Western doctor, long resident in north China. On seeing him kiss his five-year-old daughter, a Chinese man friend reproved him: "We never kiss our daughters when they are so large; we may when they are very small, but not after they are three years old, because it is apt to excite in them bad emotions, which young girls should not know. Young girls should be kissed by no man until they are married and then, of course, only by their husbands" (Coltman 1891:99).

and arousing evil thoughts. And they claimed as brides those who already had husbands" (Bredon and Mitrophanow 1972:168-69). Amorous women in stories frequently turned out to be dangerous half-animal spirits, such as fox-fairies. Sexual intercourse with fox-fairies was connected in popular imagination with a communicable "leprosy debt" that prevented reincarnation of the soul (Watters 1874:63). The fox-fairy who "served" Zhu Xi in the legend of the epigraph to this chapter had to compete for his (apparently limited) favors with a frog-fairy, causing him much misery. These sexually demanding *yin* creatures died under mysterious circumstances in Zhu Xi's garden (Bredon and Mitrophanow 1972:438).<sup>7</sup> In the universally known Weaver-Cowherd story, even marital sexual love is punished and placed under the restriction of a yearly meeting when a young wife neglects her weaving in her attachment to her spouse. We are warned early in the tale that this relationship is too ardent to be tolerated. In some versions of the story, the herder gets his supernatural wife through the intervention of a magical animal that acts as go-between, and he persuades her to marry him by stealing her clothes while she bathes (Bredon and Mitrophanow 1972:372). Animal lust and nudity, incompatible with correct marital relations and womanly duty, bode ill.

The legendary patron deity of silkworms was apotheosized as the result of an extraordinary and ambiguous sexual career. Having promised to marry whoever retrieved her lost father, she found herself engaged to his faithful horse. She and her mother agreed to keep this promise, but her father objected and had the insistent horse killed. Wrapped in her horse-husband's hide, the young woman soared into the heavens. There, the Pearly Emperor proclaimed both daughter and horse to be morally correct and transformed her into a goddess-silkworm. Although confirmed in her unusual sexual choice and openly worshiped by women who raised cocoons, she was not permitted to remain human (Gray 1875:615-17).

Folklore attributes much negative power to women which derives from the pollution of menstruation and childbirth (Ahern 1975; Seaman 1981). The dangers of female pollution were taken very literally, at least in folk history. In a legendary siege of Linqing in 1774, defenders displayed simulated menstrual blood and naked prostitutes from their city wall to overcome White Lotus female and male rebels (Ching 1988:309-10). Later in the battle, the virginal rebel Wu San-niang seemed unstoppable: the struggle against her went on for hours until the Qing

7. Zhu Xi is the subject of more than one apocryphal tale. He is mockingly accused not only of sexual feebleness and murder but also of inordinate pride and of superstition: "On the death of this great rationalist, his son went to the inner chamber, to find the coffin of his father suspended in the air several feet above the ground, without any visible support. Falling on his knees, the son besought the dead man to remember the principles he had taught all his life, and behold, the coffin gently and silently descended into its place" (Shryock 1931:46). Such stories must have amused many generations of Chinese women.

troops feared she would escape when it became dark. An old soldier then countered her *yin* force by cutting the genitals from the body of a dead [male] rebel, and firing them from a cannon. San-niang fell to the ground, overcome (315-16).

Female power of a positive kind is consistently coded as either asexual, anti-sexual, or maternal. A great lady of the past — beautiful, virtuous, wealthy, and apparently very strong indeed — received credit in folklore for erecting a nunnery and temple on a mountain near the Mongolian border. Promising to build them of stone with her own hands in a single night, she challenged would-be suitors to construct a stone bridge overnight to win her in marriage. Only one man tried; he failed. She sent him away, and lived out her days in single blessedness in her own nunnery (Bell 1965:122).

Another change on reproductive possibility is rung in the cult of Lady Linshui, widely known among Chinese who hail from the basin of Fujian's Min River and chronicled recently by Brigitte Berthier (1988). "La dame-au-bord-de-l'eau" is able to accomplish miracles through ritual training undertaken during her maidenhood. Once pregnant, however, she can save her locality from punishing drought only by abstracting and storing her fetus, intending ultimately to resume the pregnancy. Baulked by another woman — sometimes her mother, sometimes her mother-in-law — she hemorrhages to death, becoming yet another gynecological goddess instead of a healthy mother.

The special and often supernatural qualities of women is emphasized in some stories by the unique abilities of their sons. Long bridges of very large stones in Fujian are popularly believed to have been built by a man mystically chosen while in the womb of a new bride; this special son received considerable supernatural help in building the famous bridge. The mother is a key figure in the story, both in the remarkable nature of the pregnancy and in her determination to educate him for a special destiny (Dukes [1878?]:144-50). Bide, a very popular unofficial god, was the child of a spirit mother who conceived by being "overshadowed" by the sun. She gave birth to her supernatural boy through an incision in her side, thus avoiding the symbolic complications of vaginal delivery (Gray 1878, 1:158).

The most powerful and widely worshiped female supernaturals, however, remained virgins.<sup>8</sup> The Taishan Niang Niang, vegetarian at three, refused to consort with the emperor and began to perform miracles (Overmyer 1984). Guanyin legends attribute her power to virginity, as do those of Mazu. For many Chinese women, Guanyin, who can do many different kinds of work and has the unbound feet of a woman who labors, is a celibate model for "strong, independent, and successful women," according to Sankar (1978:310). Chinese female gods are virgin mothers, if they are mothers at all. The most powerful, such as Guanyin

8. B. J. Ter Haar offers a useful interpretation of the unmarried state of several popular Fujian supernaturals, including both females and males (1990).

and Mazu, are represented as mothers who have never had sexual relations or borne children. Although virgin motherhood permits of much-complicated interpretation, one meaning is relatively clear and overwhelmingly prominent among Chinese women I have known in Taiwan. Unsurprisingly, Guanyin and Mazu are women who have achieved an ideal existence: they became the mothers of a vast, adoring family without having to become daughters-in-law, wives, or the creatures of sexual desire. "That really would be like being in heaven," a Taiwanese woman remarked.

#### MODELS FOR CELIBACY

In the previous chapter, we see commoners representing the heavenly bureaucracy as they would prefer the world to be, with even salvation commoditized and the source of social power revealed to lie with producers. Is the stress on autonomy through celibacy in women's vision of the supernatural only a wish-fulfilling fantasy, or did possibilities exist in *this* world for women to gain the security of a family without its oppression?

Chinese women are profoundly ambivalent about marriage. In most times and places, it has been the only career open; most women surely wanted to marry. Prostitutes sang longingly for the security and respectability of married life (Ayscough 1938:94, 95-97). Given the low status and hard work of a new daughter-in-law, anxieties about childbirth, the widespread symbolic deprecation of female sexuality, and the near-universal abomination of female genitals and their fluids, however, marriage was a fearsome thing. In some regions, women sang institutionalized bridal laments, such as that recorded for a Hong Kong boatwoman, in which marriage is equated with death. The verbal exchanges neatly capture the ambivalence of her transition:

The bride initiates each sentence, addressing her handmaidens in turn, bewailing her sad fate, only to be answered by a reassuring sentence. The whole conversation is impromptu, misery from the bride, and cheerfulness from her companions. She says she is dying, and the first had better go to the coffin-maker. The latter counters that she has just given her a thermos flask, and they'll all go for a picnic in the hills. A demand for the second to buy grave clothes is countered with a reminder of the iron for freshening up her party clothes. (Burkhardt 1982:85)

Patrick Hase (1990:21) gives the following lament, also from Hong Kong:<sup>9</sup>

9. Other examples of bridal laments can be found in E. Anderson 1975, Blake 1978, E. Johnson 1984 and 1988, and Xie Zhimin 1991. Bridal laments are best documented from the Guangdong area, but used to be common in Sichuan and Fujian as well. I have as yet been unable to transcribe any, however, because they are now seen as too subversive and/or indecent.

Oh my mother, my mother! Be honest with yourself, think very carefully!  
Oh my mother, my mother! Your poor daughter is very young, I have been with you only a very short time.  
Oh my mother, my mother! There will be no-one to play games any more at your side.  
Oh my mother, my mother! From today, you won't have a daughter to worry about any more.  
Oh my mother, my mother! This poor girl is being dragged away to be married, so hard, so very hard!  
Oh my mother, my mother! Kill him, destroy him! He is like an evil official who destroys the country!  
They are ganging up together, forming a conspiracy, thinking of a trap!  
Oh my mother, my mother! They are coming today to rape this helpless girl. You have betrayed me. Your daughter is so sad!  
Oh my mother, my mother! Who would believe it? Today you have caused me great trouble.  
Oh my mother, my mother! One day you will wear yourself out when you think of me, your daughter. And of how you gave me up at the end of the year.  
Oh my mother, my mother!

In discussing the problems of polygynous households, Gray observed that "many Chinese ladies are opposed to matrimony" (1879, 1:185). He gives numerous examples of women in mid-nineteenth-century Guangzhou who refused marriage (1878, 1:185-86), principally to avoid the hostilities of polygynous households, where sexual jealousy and enforced hierarchy made women enemies. Young widows everywhere who refused remarriage (some even committed suicide) could easily claim credit for their determined faithfulness to a dead spouse. Other interpretations are possible, however: suicide and virtuous chastity saved a woman from yet another forced marriage. Threat of suicide gave a young woman a powerful weapon against parents-in-law eager to be rid of her. A long wave of widow suicides appeared in Fujian in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Doolittle 1966, 1:108-12; Mann 1987b) at a time when commercial expansion may have been affecting kinship and gender roles — in this case, constricting the already narrow range of women's options.

Marriage resistance as an alternative for women was given ritual form in north China, where in legend a minor but frequently seen goddess actively opposes marriage for others as well as for herself. Interestingly, her brother plots to get her married, but fails. To foil marriages, she even employs a wicked henchman, who "disfigures and 'spoils' brides," presumably deflowering them (Bredon and Mitrophanow 1972:419).

Most of what we know of institutionalized marriage resistance comes from the Guangdong county of Shunde in the nineteenth century, when wages for silk

reelers made parents willing to keep daughters at home during the early years of their marriages or to allow them to live independently with other similarly minded women. Extensive sojourning abroad by Shunde men resulted there in a tradition of proxy marriages, in which wife and husband never met (Burkhardt 1982:106); the tightly controlled use of sons' as well as of daughters' labor contributed to the likelihood that women would live a nonmarital life. Some women formed societies whose members vowed never to marry, and some killed themselves rather than break this vow. Authorities made strong efforts to crush the organization (Couling 1917:501). Outside observers in the nineteenth century associate this tradition with rumors of other forms that opposition to marriage may have taken among such women:

Dark hints are given as to the methods used to escape matrimony. The sudden demise of betrothed husbands, or the abrupt ending of the newly-married husband's career suggest unlawful means for dissolving the bonds. When they submit to marriage they still maintain their powers of will. One of their demands being that the husband must go to the wife's home to live, or else live without her company. . . .

Those belonging to such an association are taught by the nuns, so it is said, to kill their husbands by saying certain charms or incantations, by taking hairs out of their husbands' queues for some certain hidden purposes, by procuring the bones of dead infants or children . . . , and these latter are buried under the bed, fireplace, and family rice-jar. The societies to which such women belong are called Mai Fu Kau [*mai fu chiao*]). . . . These girls went about formerly with four ounces of arsenic, supplied by the nuns, who, it is said, not only used to charge them ten taels for it, but often cheated them; . . . At the present day [1892] opium is carried on their persons, and they threaten to take their lives if forced to marry. (Ball 1982:375-76)

Marjorie Topley has described this complex, which persisted in various forms until the collapse of the Guangdong silk industry in the 1920s, as a marriage resistance movement (1975). She observes that domestic sericulture combined with the introduction of steam filatures and an export boom gave many women such high incomes that their parents supported them in creating what Andrea Sankar (1978) calls "interrupted residence" and Janice Stockard (1989) calls "delayed transfer" marriage as a local norm. She warns us (as do Sankar and Stockard) that "we must bear in mind that women all over Kwangtung traditionally worked outside their home, and by this century women in other provinces were also working in cash-earning occupations. Yet marriage resistance remained unique to one small area" (68). And she asks why this was so. The remainder of Topley's article, the first section of Sankar's dissertation, Stockard's book, and a master's thesis by Wu Fongyi (1992) present the answer. The economic context was crucial, but an already-existing tradition of income-earning work for women, sepa-

rate residences for unmarried girls, and a number of myths and celebrations provided a cosmological charter for marriage resistance.<sup>10</sup>

The virginity, chastity, and sisterly collective life of these independent women stood in clear opposition to the ideals of marriage. While delayed transfer marriage was still a current custom, the coresident "sisters" created considerable group pressure for a young married woman to refuse sexual intercourse with her husband, as Sankar points out: "Sisters who broke the vow of celibacy and wanted to leave the sisterhood before the others had agreed to disband were harassed by other members of the group. The woman who had transgressed was cut off from the friendship of the other sisters." Many women permanently remained apart from their husbands, using their wages to purchase substitutes; and perhaps as many as one out of ten took vows that bound them never to marry and to renounce all claim to economic support from their paternal homes. Based on the accounts of her informants, Sankar concludes that in parts of the Pearl River delta, there existed "a subculture in which women saw marriage as a form of slavery and regarded it as a humiliation" (1978:52, 20, 83, 117, 127, 141, 10).

Maria Jaschok has recently found the memories of this tradition still green:

Many women of the older generation whom I met in Hong Kong remembered the women of Shunde without prompting on my part: the pilot-history of female independence held alive by women in the southern parts of China. . . . Shunde constituted as much an important part of women's consciousness as the knowledge of the frequent occurrence of female infanticide in Guangdong and Fujian before liberation. "Shunde" and "female infanticide" constituted two opposites in a continuum of female life in traditional Chinese society. Neither may have come within the realm of experience of a particular woman, but they were no less potent in influencing her subjective identification of femaleness. (1988:65)

Another and much more widespread possibility for marriage resistance existed. Though a woman might not legitimately choose her own spouse or might refuse to marry the man her parents had chosen, she could refuse marriage altogether by promising celibacy (Gray 1878, 1:131). Parents who cared for a daughter

10. Both Sankar and Stockard object to the term "marriage resistance." Sankar is emphatic that the complex "does represent the result of a combination of historical, economic, and social factors, but it was also the natural and socially acceptable extension of a singular local culture" (1978:16). Stockard agrees, adding that such marriage resistance as occurred was directed "against the local delayed transfer marriage system" (1987:4). As this very system permitted not only delay of marriage but the option of buying one's self out of all marital obligations through the purchase of a substitute, Topley's use of "marriage resistance" — she does not offer "marriage refusal" or "marriage abolition" — seems perfectly apt. The consequence of delta custom *was* resistance to marriage, although not its absolute abandonment.

and who could afford to pass up her brideprice might well accept her refusal to marry. The problem of her support remained, however. Thus few women could avail themselves of this customary loophole.

Those who did so commonly entered either a formally constituted nunnery or a vegetarian hall. In older literature, the two are rarely distinguished; Sankar describes a variety of vegetarian halls in twentieth-century Hong Kong and their complex connections with both Buddhism and the Great Way of Former Heaven sect (1978). The freedom of women who led such lives contrasted markedly with the housebound lives of ordinary women. Nuns were highly visible as they went about collecting for charity or performing at women's funerals on unbound or let-out feet. Individual nuns were often well known regionally for their piety and for the freedom it gave them. A "Miss Ch'en" of Weihaiwei, Shandong, left her nunnery from 1628 to 1643, wandering as far as Beijing to collect funds for an image of Buddha in her home city (Johnston 1910:405). She would have traveled from nunnery to nunnery, relying on her openly professed chastity to protect her from the sexual harassment women usually met in the streets,<sup>11</sup> and on the hospitality of sister nuns along the way. The small miracle, involving a tiny offering, which preserved her name in local history was less miraculous than her independence.

Gray comments, in his usual kindly fashion, on the apparent happiness of nuns' lives: "At the celebration of the Chinese New Year festivals in 1860, I saw a party of nuns at a pic-nic in the pleasure grounds attached to one of the principal temples at Canton, and the zeal with which they entered into a little recreation could not have been surpassed by a bevy of school-girls holiday-making in the green fields of merry England" (1878, 1:132-33). Sankar stresses the same qualities of sociability, fun, and satisfaction in the lives of contemporary women living in celibate sisterhoods, whether these were informal, organized as vegetarian halls, or conventual:

Sisterhoods have been able to create for themselves the Chinese ideal of a golden old age. Their anomalous status on the fringes of society — one which most Hong Kong Chinese clearly pity — has given the spinsters economic and social freedom, something which few other Chinese women until recently could claim. Unfettered by the ties of family responsibilities and unhindered by intergenerational strife, they have established for themselves a peaceful, secure and sometimes even luxurious retirement. The lives of the spinsters in most of the *chai t'angs* I visited were filled with companionship, compassion, and affection for one another. (1978:339-40)

Not all women who took vows of celibacy remained celibate; certainly some were lesbian (Sankar 1978:52; Wu Fongyi 1992). The possibility that they might

11. Village women in west Fujian told me that before the revolution women who ventured into the public market were roundly abused by men, and "They threw shit at us."

also engage in heterosexual relationships worried Chinese officials a good deal. Although the charges that nuns lived a sexual life were probably largely fabricated, a suggestion exists that some temples offered the sexual services of some resident women to pilgrims and local residents. British officials in Hong Kong believed this of certain mixed-sex vegetarian halls early in this century, suggesting they were little more than brothels (Sankar 1978:251).

My recent visit to a Sichuan Daoist temple newly reopened for pilgrimages piqued my own suspicions as well. The young women in residence were extremely pretty and accommodating, contrasting dramatically with the plump, shaven, plainly dressed Buddhist nuns in the temple up the way. The astute head of these Buddhists was especially emphatic, I thought, about how one could see the "Buddha-nature" in their round, undecorated faces. "You can tell if someone is spiritual that way," she commented slyly.

A novelette written around 1900 by the reform-minded Liu Tieyun (Liu E) uses a Daoist nun as the author's "ideal of an emancipated person" (Lin Yutang 1936:v) and describes in nonjudgmental terms her convent surroundings. Some women were sold into convent life as children, free to leave it only after they had paid their debt, which they did by attracting donations. They had natural feet, but they kept their hair, dressed elegantly, used cosmetics, and attended or entertained pilgrims. As long as a young woman remained a virgin, she could keep personal gifts given by visitors, relying on the temple to supply her with clothing suitable for her geishalike work and with all other needs. A girl who decided to abandon virginity would require her deflowerer to make a large donation;<sup>12</sup> one who chose to marry would give her brideprice to the temple; one who simply decided to go adventuring, as the heroine of Liu's novelette planned to do, had first to buy herself out. If she remained in the temple after ceding her virginity, she would no longer have the right to refuse sexual intercourse to pilgrims who requested her company. Those who remained after the age of thirty were likely to devote themselves to chastity and piety. Here again, we see that by giving up virginity, women, even in a convent, gave up control over their sexual destinies. The heroine, after a lengthy, jesuitical calculation of what is both pure and economically advantageous, opts for

12. An apparently factual account, "Diary of a Nun" describes the early-twentieth-century "dowries" of two sisters-in-law who enter the same convent. The young widow of the second woman's brother asks her parents-in-law to sell her original dowry to pay for her convent entry fee. Her mother-in-law prefers to keep the things and give the woman \$1500 (in an unspecified currency). The daughter of the family, who becomes a nun against her parents' wishes, is given \$1000, presumably out of family funds. This material appeared first in Chinese in a Buddhist periodical *Hai Chao Yin* (Sound of the tide), vol. 2, nos. 11-12, February 1923; it was translated by Y. Y. Tsu in the *Journal of Religion* 7: 5-6 (October 1927): 612-61, and is reprinted in Laurence G. Thompson's *The Chinese Way in Religion* (1973:120-24).

celibacy and freedom, leaving the female audience to her story enraptured with her wisdom.<sup>13</sup>

Nunneries and other forms of ideally celibate sisterhoods existed on the fringes of society, a small but significant part of Chinese women's worlds. On Sichuan's Min Shan, nuns once picked the temples' famous teas. A nineteenth-century observer in Chaozhou (Swatow), describes how numerous nuns in many nunneries supported themselves by the city's fashionable embroidery, sewing, spinning, and weaving, as well as by officiating at women's funerals, performing exorcisms, and chanting special petitions. The nuns were fine craftswomen, and "almost the only women who know how to read." In the area's extraordinarily active market for little girls, nuns bought healthy children (for a pound sterling each), and taught them to read, weave, and embroider. Some Chaozhou nuns had as many as twenty such apprentices, who generally chose to take vows at fifteen rather than leave the comfortable and prosperous convents. The nuns often went on excursions to bring home boatloads of fruits and vegetables. They were "well-to-do in the world." "Their incomes are large and their lives easy. In general, they appear strong, portly, and comfortable beyond other Chinese women" (Fielde 1887:72-74). Some nuns and devout laywomen lived on temple endowments, wages from domestic work, and, perhaps, from silk reeling.

Nunneries and laywomen's vegetarian halls were common in Guangzhou, small ones having ten to twenty inmates, and larger ones over eighty (Gray 1878, 1:131). Both Buddhist and Daoist sects supported the ideal of such communities throughout China. It had a resilient pattern that very effectively met the needs of the single women who became factory workers or domestic servants under industrialization (Sankar 1978). In the 1990s, the city of Xiamen has more than a dozen, most of them reconstituted since the Cultural Revolution. They appear to flourish best where busy commodity markets make it possible for women to earn much of their own livings.

Women's communities were highly vulnerable, however, to official interference. The Qing code forbade the setting up of new "religious houses," stipulating that founders were to be taken as state slaves and forfeit all property (Staunton

13. I do not think that this story is intended as a critique of brothel-like convents. The tale as translated by Lin Yu-tang under the English title *A Nun of Taishan* is part of an early, serialized version of Liu Teyun's celebrated *Lao Can Yu Ji*. Though Liu's novel was satirical, the convent-as-brothel is presented entirely in passing, as background for a series of moral decisions leading to a better life. It contains no attacks on women who decided differently from the chaste but calculating heroine. Lin's preface suggests no critical subtext to the tale, only admiration for Liu's happy, emancipated heroine. Harold Shadick refers to her as "a charming young nun" with a "strangely complex character," who illustrates Liu's idea of sexual, intellectual, and spiritual companionship "comparable to, though different from, Western romantic love" (1952:xvii). Although the story remains fiction, its details fit with many hints about nuns' lives which may have been largely censored from print.

1810:83). The commonness of small, independent vegetarian halls may be attributable in part to this decree, for women would have been more secure (if less independent) in the long-established, and usually larger, endowed convents attached to temples. The insecurity of all women's religious communities, however, was notorious. In 1688, the governor of Fujian "requested" that Buddhist nuns under thirty years old be returned to their parents (Vermeer 1990b:129); in the early eighteenth century, another Fujian governor ordered nuns to be married off (Spence 1992b:127). Gray describes the largest nunnery in Guangzhou, with more than one hundred women and girls, as having been nearly closed down by city magistrates under the Daoguang emperor (1821-51) for immorality (1875:586). In 1871 in Guangzhou, a small Daoist sisterhood refused to contribute to a local artisans' fifth-month festival. The artisans accused the women of immorality, called on local elders to suppress the house, and drove them out with sticks and stones. Having paid up, they were allowed to return a few days later (Gray 1878, 1:104-5). Gray also describes a case in Wuchang, where the governor put a stop to "corruption" — almost certainly this refers to sexual behavior — in nunneries by disbanding them all. Some Daoist nuns escaped because they had retained their hair and could disguise themselves as laywomen. The Buddhists, conspicuously bald and perhaps too poor to afford bribes, were taken in larger numbers. The governor ordered the women's families to take them home, as otherwise they would be handed over "to any eligible parties who might wish to have a wife" (1:133). This case was not particularly unusual; early in the twentieth century, a north Fujian magistrate dissolved an "immoral" nunnery and sold the nuns in bags, by weight, at eighteen cash a catty (Darley 1917:164).

Folk ideology helped women define their weak social and kin position as stemming from the economic and sexual pressures to marry, and isolated the contradictions that women faced in a patriarchal kinship system. Wives were portrayed as dependent, precariously situated, unclean; celibate women had independence, ritual power, purity. At the same time, popular belief reinforced the value of motherhood: mothers of loving, dutiful, tribute-presenting children were powerful and prosperous — although conception and birth brought both physical and spiritual dangers. How to reproduce for one's self, rather than only for others, was perceived as the key dilemma by Chinese women.

Folk ideology offered both a mystical and a mundane "solution" to this tangle, two routes to a life with children but without marriage: the virgin goddess and the nun. Some women did, and all women might, support themselves (and children) and hence refuse marriage. That much was abundantly clear to the women of Shunde, Chaozhou, and the neighborhood of every Chinese nunnery. Celibates, like goddesses, could become mothers by adoption or purchase. To mother children that one did not bear is, however, biologically untenable as a social norm: some women must suffer childbirth, if not marriage. For society, if not for the individual, biology sets material limits to the construction of culture along

the lines reflected in Chinese folk analyses of the feminine. In practice, the rarity of capital that lay outside patricorporate control meant that marriage, as well as motherhood, remained essential. Women thought their way through to imagining matriarchy, resisting marriage, and creating antipatriarchal intimacy among themselves. But they could not think their way out of biology's sole mechanism for the making of babies. Given their political economy, biology trapped women in the web of kinship and in naturalistic assumptions about gender.

#### REPRODUCTIVITY AND WOMEN'S POWER

A concern for issues of reproductivity predictably permeates folk images of women in China. Some connect women directly with petty capitalism and the reproductivity of money. A striking recent example of this idea is the popularity of the money-seeking three-legged toad which swept Taiwan in the late 1980s. By 1988, manufacturers of tourist souvenirs in Fujian were catering to their Taiwan customers' liking for representations of this legendary creature. In Taipei street markets, the toad was available in a multitude of forms: my souvenir of this craze is a rhinestone-studded vermilion container in toad shape, standing on a heap of money, with the traditional cash in its mouth. Toads were everywhere in Taipei for a few years, icons of a mentality based on the new gambling and numbers games (such as *da jia le* [Hu Tai-li 1986]) and the scandalously overinflated stock-market.

The toad's long-standing symbolic associations are overwhelmingly with riches and with *yin* — female — qualities. The three-legged toad seen in the shadows on the moon's surface is a woman, punished by animalization for disloyalty to her husband. Extravagantly *yin*, she also symbolizes greed (Bredon and Mitrophanow 1972:412). The three-legged toad legendarily helped her master, a money-spinning immortal, to find and keep wealth. A graphic representation from the pilgrimage site of Hua Shan in 1940s Shanxi shows her turning "into strings of cash the silvery moonbeams rippling across the seas" (Morrison and Eberhard 1973: fac. 82, pl. 67). This supernatural-and-frog couple are "invoked for success in commercial enterprises." Frog spirits had temples, especially in Zhejiang, where they could be petitioned for wealth. Even local officials worshiped there before assuming office (Bredon and Mitrophanow 1972:166-67).

Toads and frogs hold their place in popular imagination, perhaps, because of their self-transformations from tadpoles. This process reinforces the link between women and money. Women reproduce. So, in the appropriate political-economic context, does money. Money-as-capital transforms itself into commodities and back again into money or simply magically becoming "greater than itself" through the miracle of interest. That women are to the PCMP as men are to the TMP, however, is the kind of structuralist accident endemic to

dualisms. The "women" and "capital" homology is a fragile one that would bear little argumentative weight. Yet, in interviews with small-business women in both Taipei and Chengdu in 1988, I found women, even those in partnership with their husbands, very willing to assert that women, in general, were better at business than men, or at least as good. Women's traditional "narrow-heartedness" in family matters was their tendency to define implicit family contracts very strictly, demanding agnatic separation, insisting on their and their children's full share of household resources, and following a code of balanced or even negative reciprocity with their husbands and in-laws. Hard bargaining in family exchanges was expressed by a prosperous nineteenth-century Shandong woman asked whether her husband might take a concubine: "I would just like to see my 'lao yeh' take another wife. I would make it hot for him and her. He dare not; for haven't I borne him five of the finest boys in the city?" (Coltman 1891:99).

This training in self-interest pays off when women have the opportunity to become petty capitalists in their own right. The postindustrialization shift of both Taipei and Chengdu women from being extremely housebound and economically dependent is astonishing, adding a new dimension to the old stereotype that women are narrow-hearted. That women are seen as close-fisted in money matters, however, does not contradict the image of goddesses as compassionate and universally loving: the Guanyins and the Mazus are *mothers*. Margery Wolf's concept of the uterine family — children bound to their mother by love and debt — remains the essential metaphor. What a grasping woman takes via petty-capitalist *interjia* transfers, a loving mother offers to her children in open-handed giving. If she has done wrong, she did it unselfishly — for her children. The uterine family, giving great strength, also traps women in a web of kinship (and sentimentality) not of their own spinning. The greatest danger in that web was the combination of parental authority with commoditization, with the results that women themselves were bought and sold, as still happens under all Chinese regimes.

Although women colluded in strengthening the kinship system that so insidiously re-created their gender oppression, they often resisted more direct forms of control. Official and male attempts to hold power were sometimes met with flat refusals to obey parents, parents-in-law, husbands, and sons. Descriptions of women, and even little girls, who refused to do what they were told are rare, but impressive. A young girl wanting to go to church against her parents' will "set herself to sulk and starve, in true Chinese fashion, a method which often causes the offended and the offender to change places." She refused food until the parents agreed (Darley 1917:34-35). Two women in Sichuan told me recently of their refusal, as girls, to remain footbound. "Every day when we went out to the fields, we'd take the bandages off. When we came home, they'd beat us, and put them back on. But we had to work, and we couldn't work properly with the bindings.

So finally, our parents just let us go natural-footed." Shandong women have had particularly good reporters: both R. F. Johnston and Robert Coltman note examples of women's power in the home which, when it turned angry and sour, was highly visible. The *ma-jie-di* — "curse-the-street woman" — was "the kind of woman who by blows or threats drives her husband out of the house, follows him into the road, and there — if he has sought safety in flight — proceeds to pour torrents of abuse at the top of her voice upon her male and female neighbors and all and sundry passers-by" (Johnston 1910:201-2). "Women of the laboring classes often engage in street-fights; you can hear them for blocks away, and their language is of the foulest and most disgusting imaginable" (Coltman 1891:93). Shandong women were not infrequently taken to law by male relatives who found them uncontrollable; one litigant who said in open court that he feared his wife claimed that "eight men out of ten are afraid of their wives" (Johnston 1910:197). Women refused to honor betrothal contracts if the fiancé died, ran away from marriages into which they had been sold (204, 213, 214). Life histories of Shandong women show the strength and straightforwardness for which this "traditional" region is famous (Pruitt 1967; Gates 1987b:118-30). Sichuan men, too, say that most men fear their wives; Sichuanese women are renowned as strict household managers, strong partners, and formidable opponents in marital disputes. There and elsewhere, a governor's wife kept his seal, and a businessman's his keys. Businessmen often consulted their wives before concluding a bargain (Mrs. A. Little [1898]:121). The anecdotal literature for many Chinese cities, notably in the Hong Kong and Guangzhou region, argues for the strength of women in the home (also Mrs. Foster 1899:42-43, for Hangkou). So too does the embarrassed anxiety of many contemporary Chinese men in discussing this topic. A Hong Kong administrator summed up the paradoxical situation of the average farmer's wife, "who, being entirely at his mercy, rules him with a rod of iron" (Menpes 1909:77). Women's strength in the battle of the sexes is given popular recognition in the image of the dragon trying to swallow the moon toad, which swells up its body and is thus unassimilable. The toad, however, is not strong enough to defeat the dragon; the struggle is eternal (Ayscough 1925:234). The "henpecked" husband who "fears for his ears" — *pa erduo* — is a stereotype universally productive in China of much low humor.<sup>14</sup>

Examples of women's resistance to male power are peppered through descriptions of daily life as well as implicit in popular ideology. Under special economic

14. Arthur Smith recorded an example of Chinese literary word-play suggesting the universality of anxiety over control by women: a formal examination-style essay on the theme of the hen-pecked husband made up entirely of phrases taken, wildly out of context, from the Confucian Four Books. The essay concludes: "Not able to command her, not willing to receive orders from her, cut off from all intercourse with her, offended against, and yet not contending, not revenging unreasonable conduct, lest I should have no posterity" (1965:169).

circumstances, when women could offer abnormally large contributions to their parents' households and even support themselves, many refused marriage. Even under ordinary conditions, enough women lived as nuns to exemplify the autonomy that came of the renunciation of marriage, if not always of sex. The female gods whose popularity obliged officials to take notice of them attained that popularity in large part because women's enthusiasm for their rituals stood as evidence for their power. The vision of power exercised in a compassionate and egalitarian way appealed as well to low-ranking men. The antibureaucratic, populist strain in Chinese folk ideologies feeds into hopeful possibilities for Chinese political futures; women and the poor have had a voice.

#### FOLK IDEOLOGY AS RESISTANCE

Chinese commoners describe and enact their morally ambiguous cosmos in rituals promoting the local mutual reliance that enables them to fend off officials, enemy villagers, and gangsters and to form gangs to prey on others. They support the relationships within *jia* which permit the extraction of something much like surplus value from females and young males. They give a market town or a neighborhood a good name for well-made products and credit-worthiness. They widen the bonds of social relations. They entertain and amuse. They even create expectations of solidarity in true Durkheimian fashion. And they manufacture meanings, which often differ among social subjects. A satisfactorily polysemic symbol can unite many categories and classes of people in common action, as James L. Watson has shown for Mazu (1985:323).

The function of folk religion as a tool for creating and organizing meaning is not its greatest achievement. The more material tasks accomplished through religious practice seem more significant and, to me, more interesting. People's experiences are shaped, of course, by how they perceive and discuss the world around them, but that world exists very largely outside of individual or even of social control. Many consequences of action are unintended; and forty blows of the big bamboo will strip the skin from the most relativist bottom. In egalitarian, preclass societies with low workloads and little or no exploitation, people's ideological lives might possibly have been largely a form of meaning-production, the low-tech alternative to television or hermeneutics. But it was not so in China, where people struggled for survival, largely against other people.

The point at which the currently fashionable insistence on the social production of meaning ceases to be merely a sophomoric *aperçu* occurs when alternative meaning enables alternative action. What became different in Chinese life because commoners, and women, saw the cosmos as they did? Did ordinary Chinese simply describe the social world of gods, ghosts, and ancestors as Arthur Wolf says it appeared from their vantage point — a world of social powers with both positive and negative abilities — or did they seek to change it? Did com-

moners present a critique of the ruling class, and women of men? If it was a critique, did they act on it? Did they engage ideologically with the material world only by reflecting it, or was there a second act of engagement, a political act?

The evidence presented above suggests the latter. Clearly, popular response to oppression, apart from occasional millenarian or ethnically organized rebellions and the initially counterhegemonic Communist revolution, did not create unbridgeable political ruptures in Chinese history. Popular response to oppression appears as determined resistance to hegemonic claims, as well as the subtle shaping of these claims in, for example, the uneasy acceptance of female figures into the official pantheon and the persistence of various forms of marriage resistance. For a very different hierarchical encounter, Peter Worsley has definitively shown the involution of direct, confrontational resistance into mysticism and ritual indirection when oppressed people's attempts to assert their own interests and ideology repeatedly fail (1968). The baroque explorations of power that make up Chinese folk ideology resulted in the production of a multitude of practices quite properly called superstition. Commoner and female assertiveness has had pervasive, positive consequences as well, however, which can be described here only in the broadest terms. One is the notable and virtually universal self-respect among ordinary Chinese people described by so many foreign travelers; the other is the paradoxical but genuine power of Chinese women.

Neither of these should be expected. Official and much of popular ideology combined should have produced cringing obsequiousness to superiors in the one, and helpless passivity in the other. These behaviors can be found, but rarely represent an internalized acceptance of inferiority by Chinese people. Rather, deference is displayed on authoritative demand and performed to avoid punishment. A sixteenth-century priest noted that Ming Chinese who had traveled to Manila "laughed at the Spaniards . . . saying that if anyone had bowed . . . on only one knee to a mandarin, he would have been soundly whipped" (quoted in Boxer 1953:286-87). Or these behaviors are offered as a sacrifice of abasement — one sees this in temples — a lowering of one's self from a normal, dignified position. The autobiography of a Shandong woman reduced at one time to beggary (Pruitt 1967) is an epitome of resilient self-esteem; life histories of other Chinese women and men of varying fortunes reveal the same qualities (Gates 1987b; He 1993). Although the Chinese are not unique in this regard, it is astonishing how little real value Chinese working people attach to rulers' hierarchies of class worth. To find genuine acceptance of elitist ideals, one must go among those who benefit from them, notably scholar-bureaucrats of all recent regimes.

Rulers allied with men were, I believe, more effective in persuading women that femaleness was inferior than rulers alone were in eroding commoner dignity. Given the key place that gender inequality played in maintaining the economic security of *jia* and the accumulation of petty capital, gender differences were less effectively questioned in popular ideology than were tributary relations.

Women's strategy of capitalizing on the apparent "naturalness" of gender differences restricted the scope of their power to modify kinship roles in a political economy in which kinship was already the creature of class interests.

Much of what has been argued in these two chapters about the ambivalence with which folk belief depicts hierarchy, and the clarity with which it reveals multiple sources of social power, suggests that another layer of meaning is visible in the popular description of the cosmos. We need not venture into metaphysics to reveal it. Punishment from husbands and parents, crushing cruelty inflicted by the state, and physical danger from neighboring villages were real, material experiences, as were the extraction of resources through these means. Although neighboring strangers could be damned as monsters or ethnic aliens, and although women could find ways to claim power from the kinship status forced on them, attacks, even verbal ones, on men, parents, and bureaucrats were fearsomely risky. The meaning of ritual ambiguity, of transformations of "good" into "bad," god into ghost, virgin into mother need not be sought in profoundly complex and extremely slippery analytic constructs. Chinese people risked real danger if they too lucidly criticized the cosmos. The world as commoners experienced it brought them evil as well as good from those set in authority over them. Commoners and women had good reason to fear their rulers' vision of "order," as well as occasional reasons to be grateful for them.

#### NATURAL GENDER

Gender, naturalized as sex, is harder to criticize than class naturalized as the inequality of parent and child. From a materialist perspective, this should be so. The equation between the temporary obedience/supervision required of young child and adult parent and the permanent submission/domination of subaltern and hegemonic classes has no biological basis. Gender, by contrast, is constructed in part, though not in whole, out of differences in sexual biology.

Feminist analyses of gender grow increasingly invaginated as most feminists seek to remove socially constructed gender entirely from any dependence on the idea of biological sex. Sylvia Yanagisako and Jane Collier lament that "it is impossible, of course, to know what gender or kinship would mean if they are to be entirely disconnected from sex and biological reproduction." They concede that although "heterosexual intercourse, pregnancy, and parturition are involved in human reproduction, it is also apparent that producing humans entails more than this" (1987:34, 31). Yet they conclude that sexual differences are of no relevance whatsoever to our understanding of how gender is constructed. This position seems inconsistent with historical materialist understanding. Surely the material world includes the physical human body of which mind, and meanings, are only aspects. Biology is not everything in producing human beings, but it is not nothing either.

In the concrete instance of China, I see the "meaning" of femaleness as the intersection of the invariant biology of menstruation, conception, birth, and lactation with the operation of a historically constructed political economy. Chinese women were positioned economically, socially, and ideologically to be unable to refuse childbearing and its costs without permanently rejecting sexual intercourse. Even this doubtful privilege was often denied them. Under those circumstances, biology *was* destiny; gender was largely about sex. The folk perception of gender as absolutely natural seems, to me, absolutely natural, and not far wrong. The Chinese naturalizing of gender was not simply one among any number of possible gender constructions. Like all other peoples, they have imagined a great many unlikely things, and gone on to fetishize them. Contrary to the inferences of extreme cultural constructionists, however, the Chinese did not invent sex.

Naturalistic assumptions concerning gender produced contradiction as well as clarity. The tangled threads of naturalized gender were not a filmy mental veil to be shredded by the kind of deconstruction that reveals emperors as thugs. Pregnancy is not imagined into existence any more than are birth, lactation, and menstruation. Conceptualized in a variety of ways in various cultures, these real-world processes are not purely socially constructed entities. Gods, virtue, and class are products of imagination, projections of social abstractions, inventions of unusual minds or cultural ferment. Pregnancy, childbirth, lactation, and menstruation are part of the natural, material world, with a share in constructing us. As Emily Martin has pointed out, "because of the different relationship men and women have to their bodies, the different involvement they have in the biological events of birth and death, and the different kinds of work they do, each gender has evolved a separate view of what life and death mean and how they interrelate" (1988:168).

The immense gratitude for contraception and abortion that women express in Taiwan and China comes not from having had their consciousness raised but from having had their birthrates lowered. Their ideological flexibility about birth control seems, at first, to be startlingly counterintuitive. In all current Chinese societies, under whatever official regime, as soon as political economy, national policy, and the availability of contraceptives permitted it, Chinese women dived into the most dramatic fertility decline the world has ever seen. Many of them, as in Taiwan, which has never forced birth control, did so absolutely voluntarily. Women did not rear large numbers of children as an end in itself, as popular discourse suggests. They bore them for their own security and to meet implicit family obligations. When they became able to meet those needs in less demanding ways, birthrates plummeted without an instant of cultural braking.

Yet I do not see a social-constructionist position toward gender emerging in folk ideology, or even among Chinese feminists. Although births can now be manipulated to fit low-labor-demand/high-cost-of-children regimes of economic development, women still marry principally to establish uterine families, even if

these are small. Under the TMP/PCMP system, biological reproduction is women's only absolute material monopoly and her best connection to the resources that men still tap more effectively. A naturalizing gender stance remains inevitable. The *yin* and the *yang* will persist longer, and across a broader class spectrum, than all other elements of folk ideology because they are rooted in a reproductive asymmetry that even modern medicine alters only marginally.

# 10

## Petty Capitalism in Taiwan

In public it was compulsory to show outward signs of loyalty to the party. Loyalty to the Generalissimo was the only criterion of patriotism. . . . Even the application for a barber's license or a driver's license required a written pledge to these loyalties. — Peng Ming-min, 1972

No, we didn't put out offerings when the Old President died; we've never been very religious. A lot of people did, though. My daughters and I cried. He was not really popular with us Taiwanese, you know, but even if no one wanted him as president, we were used to him. Now that there is more than one party, the Legislative Assembly is full of businessmen. The quarrelling is terrible! There's such a thing as too much freedom. — Kho Chun-Kim, a Taipei shopkeeper, 1988

The initial impetus for this book was my wish to understand in theoretical terms the economic success Taiwan had achieved by the 1980s, and to relate that success to contemporaneous changes in China. This search has resulted in a book that looks deeper both into history and into contemporary processes of social reproduction than I had expected. Taiwan's economic "miracle" has become (perhaps appropriately, but also somewhat to my regret) a relatively minor issue in its making.

The value of conceiving of Chinese political economies as structured by the two modes of production on which I have thus far concentrated lies not only in the possibilities it presents for the interpretation of the past. Such a view of history also illuminates the present and, perhaps, adumbrates the likely pattern of the future. The book is no longer only about recent events in Taiwan, but it would be incomplete without at least a brief account of how Taiwan's people have come to their present state of relative abundance, and of their role in this process. By implication, and by an even briefer explicit analysis, I relate this history to the relatively slow expansion of wealth in China.

Many academics interested in China but unable to research there have focused on Taiwan. Fascinated by one of the rare post-World War II examples of genuine development, or, eager for an example proving that sufficiently fervent anticommunism will do the capitalist trick, they have written volubly about Taiwan's changing economy. The best of this large, generally highly ideological, and often very trying literature is summarized, interpreted, and related to Fernando H. Cardoso and Enzo Faletto's version of dependency theory (1979) by Thomas B. Gold in his *State and Society in the Taiwan Miracle* (1986). Gold's position now is widely accepted.

His central thesis is that a nearly autonomous "party-state . . . effectively led sustained economic development through several crises and maintained stability in the bargain" (122). He shapes these claims of superhuman competence by periodizing Taiwan's recent history to show Guomindang leadership cleverly extricating the economy from one difficulty after another. A "chaotic interregnum" lasted from the surrender of the island by the Japanese in 1945 until "rehabilitation and import-substitution industrialization, 1950–1959." Led by an emerging body of technocrats and pushed by considerable American pressure, production shifted to "export orientation and political quiet, 1960–73." This was followed by "industrial upgrading and the emergence of a political opposition, 1973–1983." Here the technocrats, freed (with the death in 1975 of Jiang Kaishek) from the heavy hand of the past, began to steer an increasingly complex economy to competitive status in the world capitalist economy, while that complexity expressed itself in increased demand for greater political pluralism. The theme of rigorous state control not only of the economy but of social organization, education, and all forms of counterhegemonic political expression runs through all these chapters. This is the "stability" that, together with GMD economic savvy, has made the "miracle" possible.

Gold wisely avoids the chorus of enthusiasm for "growth with equity" which burst forth after the publication of John C. H. Fei, Gustav Ranis, and Shirley W. Y. Kuo's 1979 book of that title. The figures on which their claims of increased equality were based were drawn from highly suspect income figures. Income figures, derived mostly from tax documents, are always suspect, but especially so in systems with large untaxed, "underground" economies like Taiwan's. Even data based on income statistics, however, show that the reported gap between rich and poor widened abruptly in the 1980s. These figures reflect both real change and better information. The richest fifth of the population had 7.3 times the income of the poorest fifth in 1986, up from a reported low of 4.17 in the 1970s (*China Post* 6 June 1988:1).

Without exploring its implications or suitability, Gold adopts a cautious semi-Marxist, semi-Weberian terminology in which Taiwan was precapitalist before the arrival of the Japanese (18) and has been capitalist from then till now. Beneath his argument we see the familiar functionalist distinction between polity (an autonomous state that moves the economy but is not of it) and economy (mostly

local capitalists and transnational corporations, who push for political changes primarily to lower their costs of doing business).

We can see the capitalists' motivations clearly enough. But why did this immensely powerful state do what it did to expand Taiwan's economy, especially if by doing so it sowed the seeds of its own destruction in the political liberalization of the 1980s? Had the GMD state become a captive of capitalist interests, too weak to resist their expanded power? Quite rightly, I suggest, Gold thinks not. The state "acted as if it reflected a capitalist-led pact of domination, but in reality it did not absorb capitalists into the political elite. State cadres were a professional, self-reproducing stratum" (128).

Gold's argument, like many in this genre, is weakened by its stress on elites and leadership as major factors in social change. One need not be a Marxist to realize that a leader with no followers is no leader, that even powerful hegemonic claims can be resisted and subverted unless leadership articulates something of value to the led. Propagandize and intimidate as they might, for example, the GMD never persuaded Taiwanese to take seriously the "sacred mission" to retake the mainland. Children taught this notion at school found ridicule rather than support for it at home. We must look beyond the accomplishments of a few able men to the contributions not only of Taiwan's people in general but of other significant classes. By seeing beyond the political surface, we learn how the economy survived the overburden of barbarous, corrupt, incompetent, and merely weary state functionaries dumped on it in the 1940s and 1950s. The most salient of these class actors were not the technocrats, but the petty capitalists. They kept the island afloat for twenty years while the GMD paid off its loyalists and learned how to domesticate to its purposes not just petty but multinational capitalism. In the following account of the GMD's history in Taiwan, I stress the continuities of action between this and other Chinese states, continuities that reveal the persistent reproduction of a characteristic TMP logic.

#### THE GMD AS TMP

Taiwan shows us a part of the Chinese world with a strong petty-capitalist and weak tributary history transformed into an ideal-typical tributary state by the GMD Mainlander apparatus during its first two decades in power there. Since 1965, it has shown us how petty capitalists can ally and expand with multinational capitalism without being drained dry by capitalist extractive efficiency. In the late 1980s, after martial law was at last lifted, the petty-capitalist/capitalist alliance grew strong enough to challenge GMD one-party rule and to attack key institutions of the Jiang family's tributary mode. Martial law was finally lifted in 1988.

Taiwan was never well integrated into the Chinese polity, but its history is the history of regional petty capitalism. It was brought into marketing circuits first,

briefly, by Europeans, then as the "flying territory" of Fujianese patricorporations that dominated a coastal trading zone running from Nagasaki to Manila and the ports of mainland southeast Asia. Taiwan's people, Aborigine and Han, produced mountain products, rice, sugar, and tea for export through networks of landlord-merchants, and they ran their own rough frontier politics. After 1895, Japanese capitalists and state institutions were even more efficient than Fujian-based petty capitalists in monopolizing commerce and extracting surplus. When international politicians gave the island to Jiang Kaishek's GMD in 1945, China itself was more a congeries of warlords than a nation. After 1949, the political Taiwan Straits that had always separated the island from the continent widened immeasurably as economic ties were cleanly severed.

The GMD, though they had lost the war, came to Taiwan under enviable circumstances. By 1950, approximately two million immigrants had followed it to Taiwan, virtually all of them state employees or their dependents, willy-nilly loyalists. The new government had at its disposal a Japanese-built infrastructure better than that available for any comparable region in China. It had what was left of the national treasury (approximately \$400 million in gold) and was soon to receive an average of U.S.\$80 million per year over the eighteen fiscal years 1951-1968 from the U.S. government (Jacoby 1967:38). The six million local people had been thoroughly cowed by the violent occupation of their island since 1945 and the political pogroms of 1947 and the early 1950s.

The GMD began as, and has continued to be, a major economic actor in post-war Taiwan. In the mid 1960s, Japan-based supporters of Taiwanese independence summarized a pattern that began to erode only in the late 1980s:

The powerful Kuomintang holds a firm grip over the entire administrative system. KMT Central Headquarters controls the Central Government through Party branches placed in various sections, such as those concerned with highway communications, industry, etc. The Special Party Branch . . . is in charge of supervising the Nationalist Army. Furthermore, the Taiwan Provincial Party Branch consists of 21 county and city branches, and there are 380 district main cells, known as "People's Service Centers." . . .

It is believed that the amount of money spent every year by the refugee officials for the various Kuomintang functions comes to some one billion yuan . . . or one seventh of the total national revenues. On top of this, the National Treasury provides operating expenses for the Party and the political department in the army takes its share out of the military expenses. County and city Party branches take part of the local budget. Moreover, the Kuomintang owns all of the private properties, factories, theatres, radio stations and hotels left by the Japanese in 1945. Party officials have also made an illicit fortune by taking advantage of foreign exchange regulations and importing contraband goods. (*Formosan Quarterly* 1963:106)

Through the accidents of history and of U.S. aid, Jiang Kaishek was Taiwan's strongest Chinese emperor, with powers undreamed-of by his heaven-sponsored predecessors. For almost twenty years — from 1945 until his gradual separation from economic decision making around 1965 — he ran a tributary state in Taiwan. His reign came complete with an imperial style of life, the maintenance of a state cult (Confucius and suicidally chaste women figure largely in the annual sacrifices his state supported), and a funeral that Qin Shi Huangdi would have respected.

The GMD government modified its political-economic program only marginally and reluctantly under the pressure of its capitalist patrons; rulers knew full well that foreign capital would bring disruptive external influence and social change. Paradoxically, however, their policies became a forcing-house for petty capitalism as they yielded to pressures first for land reform (in the early 1950s) and then for the admission of multinationals in 1965. The large petty-capitalist class supported itself as an auxiliary to the tributary system, but remained poor. Most accumulation was siphoned off as tribute in taxes, forced contributions, and the confiscation of profitable enterprises.

Until petty capitalism was able to ally itself with the more productive capitalist mode of production in the 1960s, Taiwan remained a sociological coelacanth: a modern tributary state. Up to one-fourth of the population depended directly on state employment, funded by taxation, forced contributions, confiscations, and foreign aid. Except for limited petty-capitalist growth, the economy was static, the polity rigidly hieratic, and the population politically intimidated. Through economic controls and the terrorism of the state, this period in Taiwan was almost a laboratory experiment in the relationships between the two traditional Chinese modes of production.

Tributary modes are not simply corrupt or deviant forms of a Weberian rational-bureaucratic state. They have an ideology, a structure, and a purpose very different from the capitalist democracies that have grown, uniquely, out of a north Atlantic origin in the past five hundred years. People — such as the Taiwanese under Japanese rule — who have experienced more rational bureaucratic systems and the relative equality of the market as a condition of political life are likely to see tributary modes as perversions of something they are not. This view is understandable, but not helpful to analysis.

In Taiwan, employment in the GMD government brought a dignified architectural "work" setting, political separation from commoners, leisure, a modest salary, and the opportunity to receive fees, meals, and reciprocal favors from people seeking official services. "Professional courtesy" was widely extended within the ruling class: functions a commoner might have to pay for were performed free for properly introduced official colleagues and their kin. The right to participate in political rituals — ambassadorial service, official banquets, television appearances, election to office, academic conferences — with all the attendant travel, special food and lodging, gifts, cars and drivers, and the like were others.

These were not trivial matters; a well-placed official found nearly all his subsistence needs met through "gifts" even if he were high-minded enough to refuse cash. The leisure offered by such "jobs" was also attractive. Into the 1970s, government offices were full of people with little to do but drink tea and disentangle the latest line from the newspapers. One did not become an official to work; work was for underlings. The purpose of becoming an official was to live the life of an official; and a very nice life it was, until one got one's politics wrong.

Most state employees, of course, were not officials or military officers. They were clerical workers, letter carriers, manual laborers in state enterprises, schoolteachers, janitors, and the like. They too were employed in large numbers, but for low salaries and with few opportunities to sell their services to the public. They engaged in an archaic exchange of service and ideological loyalty in return for minimal salaries, food (rice, cooking oil, salt, and fuel), clothing (for the military), shelter (many government units housed employees), a dilute political protection, occasional feasts and political celebrations, and symbolic gifts (awards, commendations, small pieces of jewelry).

Tributary rulers have three sources of material support: direct levies on the population through taxation and conscription; production by state employees using state resources; and, through their universalistic claims on commoner loyalty, erratic demands on wealthy commoners. Taxes and conscription are near-universals of class society; they reveal nothing new about tributary modes. State production is dealt with below.

Special levies, however, should be briefly mentioned here. They have the authentic tributary quality, made to meet emergencies, to demonstrate power, or to limit social mobility. Although irregular, they are normal; although disliked, they are officially legitimate. Under the GMD, the Taiwanese, accustomed to the more regular and impersonal methods of resource extraction used by the Japanese, saw them as corrupt. When the GMD arrived in Taiwan, the confiscation of successful businesses and the squeeze on the rich for which they had been famous on the mainland continued. The outstretched GMD hand collected gold bars from millionaires and pennies from primary schoolchildren. A child's failure to bring in her levy "to buy an airplane to retake the mainland" brought imputations of disloyalty against her family; businesspeople were squeezed by party cadres and government officials against the background of threats to cut off raw materials or foreign exchange.

Both Taiwanese and American critics of the GMD assumed that it was unable to approximate the capitalist nation-state ideal for an endless list of reasons: because of the war with the Communists, because of incompetence, because of individual greed, because U.S. aid was not great enough, and so forth. These critics were wrong. Under Jiang Kaishek, the GMD had its own purposes, and they were those of a TMP: to extract surplus, to employ the personnel needed to manage the extraction, to legitimate their actions through ideology, and thus to govern.

During the first fifteen years of GMD rule, Taiwan seemed well on the way to underdevelopment; only after twenty, by about 1965, did an expansionary trend strong enough to bring real benefits to ordinary people seem certain. Not till 1956 did Taiwan's people reattain their prewar level of real per-capita income (Jacoby 1967:89). By 1958, the rising economist K. T. Li, putting the best face on a difficult situation, described the economic situation as "stagnant" and concluded that "the past development program has come to the end of its usefulness and a change in direction is in order" (Li 1959:2, 21). By 1959, production of cash crops for export (tea, sugar cane, bananas, pineapples, citronella) had failed to regain 1937-39 levels, while more and more land was being devoted to intensively grown crops of such staples as rice, sweet potatoes, and vegetables (R. H. M. Jones 1959:585). Nonofficial publications repeated the same criticisms that had appeared regularly in the foreign (and the critical local) press for a decade: inflation was not under control (it averaged 35 percent a year in both 1959 and 1960, according to a critical source [Liau Kianliong 1963:2]); the balance of payments was extremely unfavorable; public industry was corrupt and unproductive while private enterprise strangled in red tape or starved for capital; a huge military and administrative budget drained Taiwan of all surplus, simultaneously preventing further development and creating a war climate that frightened away investors. The island's economy was losing ground to its rising population and to the externally oriented policies of its government.

The years from 1945 to 1949 had been particularly devastating. Taiwan's war-damaged industries were mostly dependent on an agricultural system that had been overstrained to meet Japan's food needs during the 1940s and that now had lost its primary outlets. GMD policy in Taiwan, similar to its policy elsewhere in China, ostensibly placed all resources in the service of the war against the Communists, while in fact corruptly diverting many of them to private pockets. Legally and illegally, for the mainland war or for private gain, products, raw materials, even the machinery of production and communication were dispatched from Taiwan (see, e.g., Kerr 1965:97-136). By the time the entire GMD state arrived in 1949-50, the infrastructure was more deeply damaged than at the end of the war. It is not surprising that GMD supporters prefer to omit data for these years from their analyses of Taiwan's economic miracle; they reveal significant declines in virtually every area. Taiwanese standards of living and expectations for the future plummeted as government incompetence and venality, epidemics, unemployment, inflation, and a process economists fastidiously call "disinvestment" undermined its formerly productive economy. Effective reconstruction was limited to two key areas: the reestablishment of Japanese transportation and communications systems, as harbors, shipping facilities, and railroads were cleared of wartime damage, and the rehabilitation of electric-power-generating

capacity, back to one-tenth of its peak prewar output by 1951 (Riggs 1952:95). Like most gains now attributed to GMD leadership, electrical-power rehabilitation was accomplished with much American aid. Westinghouse had capital in the previously Japanese utility, and wanted a return on it.

In these years, the Taiwanese often bore the brunt of Mainlander anti-Japanese sentiment and lived as if under an army of foreign occupation. The event that assured the GMD of power to create an economy of its own choosing occurred on and after 28 February 1947, when an organized Taiwanese uprising brought reprisals: the massacre of at least twenty thousand Taiwanese, the incarceration of thousands more, and the implementation of harsh measures for the control of future dissidence. Riggs (1952:59), citing Joshua Liao as authority, says another thousand oppositionists were arrested after Jiang Kaishek's arrival in 1949, and many others fled to Japan — perhaps a thousand a month in 1949 (Kerr 1965:460).<sup>1</sup>

In the Taipei neighborhood where I lived in the late 1960s and mid 1970s, several dozen traditionally envisioned ghosts were conspicuous not only by their numbers but by the apparent vagueness of their origins. Unlike most local ghosts, these had no graves or tablets, only a mysterious being. Years later, a careless teenager, to her family's embarrassment, let slip to me the hint that told the story. In 1947, soldiers had shot "dozens" of men, whose bodies tumbled over an embankment to float down Xindian Creek. No one had ever performed the ceremony that returns such ghosts to their proper resting places — family altars and family tombs. No one had dared erect an altar for their propitiation. Taiwan is full of such ghosts, haunting neighborhoods and memories, some of later date and of other ethnic origins.

Mainlanders deemed disloyal to Jiang were purged in a wave of imprisonments and dismissals after 1950 (Riggs 1952:41; Kerr 1965: 393-95, 422-24). Informal battles between Taiwanese and Mainlanders, and among Mainlander factions, continued for years: twelve Taiwanese soldiers were reported by Taiwanese nationalists outside the island to have machine-gunned two hundred Mainlander soldiers on 28 January 1964, perhaps in retaliation for the two-hun-

1. George H. Kerr, a USIS employee familiar with Taiwan, and present during the 1947 uprising, gives an account of this explosive result of GMD rule in his widely available 1965 book, *Formosa Betrayed*. Other English-language sources (e.g. Riggs 1952:46-47) usually relied heavily on Kerr's earlier articles "Formosa's Return to China" (1947a) and "Formosa: The March Massacres" (1947b). Chinese- and Japanese-language readers have had available the compendious *Taiwan ren sibai nian shi*, by the pseudonymous Shi Ming, since 1979. Since the press liberalization of the late 1980s, a torrent of scholarship has appeared on the February 28 massacres and their aftermath, confirming long-circulated oral histories and showing that the scrappy contemporary record seriously underestimated the human cost of this event. For a conservative English-language source based on GMD archives, see Lai Jeh-hang et al. 1991.

dred-household village nearly wiped out by a platoon of armed soldiers the previous December (*Independent Formosa* 3:10-11).

With the GMD defeat in China and the arrival of its government, armies, and civilian followers in 1949-50, it could no longer drain Taiwan to support the mainland directly. After the Korean War began in 1950, the GMD received increased aid and political pressure from the United States. GMD officials began to effect improvements both in the economy and in their relationships with the local population. This 1950s reconstruction, including land reform, restored basic functions, created little growth, and clearly reveal the GMD's political-economic goals. Taiwan was to provide comfortable sinecures for Jiang loyalists. Perhaps, in the future, the mainland might be retaken. That mainland recovery was not an urgent matter is clear, for Jiang refused to develop the economy in order to support such action. It may well have been that the GMD government "prefer[red] the importation of consumer goods which can be either stockpiled or sold within the economy, the proceeds to be used toward increasing the military budget" (*New York Times*, 5 September 1960, 4:1), and that it feared that "any economic improvement at the expense of the military" would favor indigenous Taiwanese (*New York Times* 3 April 1960, sec. 19:3).

The excess of consumption over production in the early decades can be laid at the door of the military, which absorbed great quantities of government revenues and foreign aid. They were chided for this in 1961, when in a startlingly honest critique in Taipei, Roy E. James, deputy director of the U.S. International Cooperation Administration, estimated that military spending accounted for 80 percent of the budget — "probably the highest rate in the world" (*New York Times*, 23 January 1961, sec. 4:7). This massive expenditure on affairs of state, especially on the maintenance of a huge population of state dependents, was not only a historical oddity, the result of Jiang's expulsion from China. It was consistent with and characteristic of the goals of tributary economies generally.

The creation of what was almost a parody of a tributary officialdom in Taiwan resulted in part from the GMD's need to employ as many as possible of the immigrants it had brought from the mainland. Initially, GMD leaders chose to limit their support of soldiers and their dependents in Taiwan: twenty-five thousand recently arrived troops died of disease in 1950 and 1951 (Riggs 1952:18); survivors remember handfuls of rice bran as rations, no shelter or bedding, and brutal treatment by their officers compounding the lack of medical care and sanitary arrangements. Most of the men under arms were kept on (at near-starvation wages — U.S.\$19 total expenditure per month per man in 1950 [Riggs 1952:112]), though 150,000 were simply demobilized to live as best they could in the ravaged economy (Kerr 1965:385). The U.S. gift of \$42 million made during the 1950s to ease this transition seems to have accomplished little for the discharged men (Riggs [n.d.]).

The choice between leaving and staying in the army was a grim one. A 1959 vignette is a response to the "Army-as-Family Campaign" organized to generate votes for Jiang Kaishek. The author objects that

in Formosa there are some . . . "wise men," who try to convince us ignorant citizens that the army is a family. They say: "You are all as brothers to each other and as sons to superior officers. And President Chiang Kai-shek is your father." . . . The army and the family are poles apart. . . . What those "wise men" are trying to do is to conceal all the hard aspects of army life by making us homeless idiots believe that the army is a family "full of warmth." Doubtless we are idiots. We are deceived easily and often we do not know that we are being deceived. But we are the ones who for many years have defended the frontline against the communists. Most of us are in our 40's now and we know what the army is and what the family is, just as we know the difference between killing enemies in battle and murdering innocent persons. (Hsiao Jen-chian 1963:118)

Another piece, from 1958, is the suicide announcement of a young discharged Shandongnese whose soy-soup stand was arbitrarily closed down by Taipei police, leaving him ruined and despairing. He addresses his friends:

Do I belong to the country really? Whom does the government ask to carry out a counterattack? Those wearing suits or those wearing the uniform of low-class soldiers? A communist slogan goes: "If there is a bowl of rice, let's eat together." Our slogan is: "The Three People's Principles guarantee our life." It sounds fine, indeed. But what is the use of such a slogan if it never is realized? It is as though we cannot eat a bowl of rice that is in front of us. What harm does my [soy-soup] stand do to the government? I know that there are hundreds and thousands of poor people, such as peddlers and day workers, living on the verge of starvation. (Chang Chen-kuei 1963:127-28)

When more and more discharged veterans appeared on the streets as peddlers, Taipei police found ample opportunity to shake their old comrades down. In 1960, another veteran complained in a newspaper that he had just spent NT\$2,500 of his NT\$7,150 severance pay on an ice-cream cart and was briskly fined a total of NT\$124 by the Second Police Branch Bureau, the Changsha Street Police Office, the Fifth Police Branch Bureau, the Poai Road Police Office, the Eight Police Branch Bureau, and the Siyuan Road Police Office (Chen Chi-yu 1963:125-27). In later years, few would dare to criticize so openly.

Some army men wanted to leave the service and were not permitted to do so; others would have remained in but were deemed useless and discharged. "I nearly went blind from bad food," one veteran told me. "When I was too sick for them to use me, they threw me away."

Having "thrown away" the weakest and least skilled, the GMD sought to make as many immigrants as possible into state employees. Many former soldiers were

employed in state enterprises and organizations, often at levels far beyond their capacity but in many cases as poorly paid door watchers or janitors. Schools, post offices, and other labor-intensive public services expanded. A semipublic construction company that built many of Taiwan's postwar roads, bridges, and nuclear installations was formed to employ retired military men. Increasingly through the late 1940s into the late 1960s, more and more people on the public payroll were Mainlanders (Gates 1981:257). Except for the ruling elite, however, the tributary economy provided public servants with sparse support.

Until the industrial boom of the mid 1960s, however, even the security and small benefits of state employment offered clear advantages compared with the risk of those in the private sector. In early decades of the new regime, state-supplied rice was a symbol and a realistic expression of the nurturance from which the Chinese tributary state traditionally drew its legitimacy. Being fed had real meaning for those who lived on the government's *peiji*: "We eat the country's rice; how could we criticize the president?" people patiently explained to me.

State production, another continuity with the past, remained central to GMD political economy. That production apparently had two goals: to produce goods directly for the state's use and to employ large numbers of people, thus retaining their loyalty. Some of these enterprises were new, but others were GMD-appropriated Japanese companies. The state (or party — it was rarely clear which) ran the railways, electrical-power-generation system, telecommunications, and broadcasting network. It monopolized cement, metals, and petroleum production. It monopsonized sugar through a corporation that refined cane bought largely from household producers, and almost monopsonized rice by requiring that farm taxes be paid in it and that fertilizer be bartered for it. Sometimes the state operated more indirectly. Numazaki Ichiro notes that in the 1950s textiles were produced on a kind of "putting-out system" in which the state received, for example, raw cotton as U.S. aid and assigned it to private producers for processing on commission (1991:110).

Part of the small increases in production of the 1950s occurred in sectors from which the GMD could easily draw a profit, such as salt and timber. Profitable enterprises were taken over by the GMD, as they had been in GMD days on the mainland (Lee Bing 1952:16–17). Sugar production especially was supervised, with quotas set for 220,000 households. Including the twenty-five thousand state factory and office workers, a little over a million people — close to one-tenth of the population — were involved in sugar production (Lee Bing 1952:116).

By 1954, the state owned the following major enterprises: Chinese Petroleum Corporation, Taiwan Aluminum Corporation, Taiwan Gold and Copper Mining Administration, Hsinchu Coal Mining Administration, Taiwan Steel Works, Taiwan Salt Works, China Textile Industries Corporation, Taiwan Power Company, Taiwan Sugar Corporation (with 30 sugar mills, 41,888 hectares of cane farm, and 3,247 km of railroad), Taiwan Cement Corporation, Taiwan Fertilizer Corpora-

tion, Taiwan Alkali Company, Taiwan Paper and Pulp Corporation, Taiwan Shipbuilding Corporation, Taiwan Machinery Corporation, Taiwan Industrial and Mining Corporation (with a metallurgical and mining division, a chemical division, a textile division, and an engineering division), Taiwan Agricultural and Forestry Development Corporation (tea, pineapples, marine products, and livestock), Taiwan Tobacco and Wine Monopoly Bureau, Taiwan Agricultural Chemical Works, and Taiwan Camphor Bureau. They employed a total of 84,300 people, contrasted with 120,000 employed by registered private industries, mostly very small in scale (*Far Eastern Economic Review* 16 [1954]:210).

This group of public enterprises made up a very large proportion of Taiwan's modern productive capacity. They turned over their profits to the government (Chen Cheng 1953:809). Profits from some enterprises were relatively large components of state-generated revenue. In 1952, for example, the Wine and Tobacco Monopoly Bureau turned in NT\$421 million in profits, much more than the NT\$162,702,172 for all state taxes, fees, and fines in that year (Chen Cheng 1953:809). In 1953, the Tobacco and Wine Monopoly revenues amounted to 40 percent of provincial-level government revenues. Profits from all government enterprises, properties, and monopolies continued to supply roughly one-fourth of central government revenues throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s (Taiwan, DGBAS 1974, Table 78:298–99).

Many state enterprises were not particularly profitable over time, however, often producing expensive goods of poor quality. Pineapples, which the Japanese had begun to grow and can as early as 1901, were grown more cheaply by individual farmers than by the big (hence, public) companies (*Far Eastern Economic Review* 15 [1953]: 86). The salt monopoly was criticized for its low productivity (*Far Eastern Economic Review* 14 [1953]:365–55). Textiles, produced privately but largely under government contract for military uniforms, were of such poor quality in the late 1940s and early 1950s that they were not fit for export (Pan Yang-shan 1954:859). To Mainlanders recently arrived from war zones, these deficiencies might have seemed understandable; to Taiwanese, who inevitably compared these results with those of the Japanese, state industry was an outrageous joke.

Through its economic and political dominance, the government through the 1940s and 1950s was able to control the prices paid for many major goods and services produced by the private sector. Rice, sugar, and fertilizer prices were set and manipulated, and sugar sales paid for, sometimes, in low-interest government bonds rather than in cash (*Far Eastern Economic Review* 15 [1953]:372). Profits were taken by state importing and exporting companies to the detriment of consumers, while foreign-exchange rates and quotas were manipulated to the advantage of big (hence state) firms (H. K. Kao 1954:45). Decisions to import or to produce goods locally during this period were probably colored by the fact that the government could freely set profit levels for itself on imports.

If the GMD had reinvested the resources drawn from Taiwan production into industrialization, infrastructure, or social needs, its extractions might have been viewed more favorably by local people and by the world. Profits from state economic activities, however, were not much used in this fashion but rather found their way through corruption into private pockets or into the unproductive maintenance of enormous tributary circuits. The GMD's success in making Taiwan's products pay its administrative and military costs was mixed. Its state enterprises were frequently criticized as money losers, run simply as well-paid retirement homes for surplus Mainlanders.<sup>2</sup> Premier Chen Cheng told the Legislative Yuan in 1953 that "in respect to personnel remunerations and administrative expenses of the [state] industries, criticisms have been especially rife" (Chen Cheng 1953:809).

The large numbers of immigrants given work in these enterprises, especially after 1949, were heavily weighted with supernumerary managerial personnel with high salaries and important perquisites. Not only were these managers numerous and expensive, they were often ignorant of the operations and techniques they were to supervise and could not talk to their subordinates: virtually none knew Japanese, few knew Taiwanese, and some did not even speak Mandarin. They could not read the files and technical manuals, which were written in Japanese, the technical language for government bureaus. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, government offices often operated on a two-tier system: Mainlander "supervisors" with very little to do except prepare personnel reports and Taiwanese technical and clerical workers — these discussed fine points in Japanese with each other and transferred instructions to manual workers or the public in Taiwanese.<sup>3</sup>

The strongest and most efficient of the state enterprises through the mid 1950s were the Taiwan Power Company and the Taiwan Sugar Corporation, both of which were targeted for special aid, including large loans, from the United States.<sup>4</sup>

2. One must be cautious of such criticism: much of it was motivated by indigenous and foreign capitalists who resented any interference with a free market. Such critics objected even more strongly to the state enterprises that succeeded.

3. The use of Japanese as a technical language for government bureaus was reproduced for decades at some universities and training institutes. Virtually the entire library collection on transportation (railroads, etc.) at Chenggong University in the mid 1970s, for example, was in Japanese, most of it dating to the Japanese period. Such small discoveries, so frequent in the years I taught in official agencies, convinced me that in the early decades the GMD had no real interest in improving transport, or anything else. Had it been otherwise, might they not have translated some of the railroad-maintenance manuals? If, in the mid 1970s, the National Teacher's University had really wanted to upgrade the middle-school English-teaching program, might they not have hired a Chinese-speaking specialist in teaching English as a foreign language instead of a non-Chinese-speaking specialist in African languages, as they in fact did?

4. Characteristically, the U.S. government, while willing to give huge sums derived from taxes to Taiwan, was not willing to injure American sugar interests by purchasing the island's major export commodity. The U.S. embargo on Taiwan sugar set up in 1934 was reinforced in 1948 (J. Y. Yang

Sugar production reemerged after a 1947 loan of US\$5 million for the repair of damaged refineries and railroads (Lee Bing 1952:16). Hydroelectric-power production was brought back to something approaching prewar levels with internal funds, and U.S. aid in 1950 greatly expanded it, with the Taiwan Power Company receiving by far the biggest share of U.S. aid to Taiwan at that time (*Far Eastern Economic Review* 1954, 17:529).

GMD currency policies (with a little help from those of the Japanese) had produced insane levels of inflation in areas under GMD control after 1937, so that a rich man's bank account was virtually worthless by 1948 (Kann 1955:592–93). Although the GMD sharply curbed these disastrous policies after it moved to Taiwan, inflation remained a problem there until the economy began to improve in the 1960s. A Morgan Guaranty Survey of 1961 called current rates of inflation and interest high — bank interest was then 2 percent per month, while private rates were three to 4 percent per month (1962:49).

The economic policies institutionalized in the 1950s were perpetuated with little change well into the 1960s; some lasted longer. During the GMD's first twenty-five years in Taiwan, state production and distribution did astonishingly little to develop the economy, but they did enable GMD rulers to establish themselves in a position of absolute dominance over virtually every aspect of the political economy and social life. The GMD was following the characteristic pattern of a Chinese tributary state: ensuring loyalty through permitting an official class to skim from the populace, assuring the production of strategic goods such as arms, and monopolizing relatively profitable commodity production, using a labor force of state employees kept captive by their political isolation from the commoners. Although outsiders saw this system as corrupt, such highly paid sinecures — not cloth or tires or electricity — are what rulers expected their tributary mode to produce. Obviously, among the multitude of government employees, many had other visions for GMD Taiwan, even in its first decades; I have met many. But they were not in charge.

In 1963, just before the new economic policies began to create real growth, a Taiwanese nationalist summarized the nearly thirty years since the peak of Japanese-managed prosperity:

1953:274). I observed a parallel case in the early 1960s, while attending the University of Hawaii. Taiwan graduate students sent by their government to the U.S.-government-sponsored East-West Center at the University of Hawaii were refused permission to study pineapple production methods at the university's Pineapple Research Institute, which was supported by the Dole Corporation. Here again, American capitalist interests outweighed Taiwan's urgent need to expand the exportability of its few commercial crops. In retrospect, the U.S. resistance to promoting foreign tropical crops probably went far to prevent a Puerto Ricanization of Taiwan's economy. In the decades before Taiwan's industrial expansion, however, it must have appeared as the height of insincerity and unhelpfulness to the farming population.

In 1936 and thereabout Formosa enjoyed a fairly prosperous economy . . . perhaps the highest in the prewar days. One Japanese *yen* (¥) at that time had the economic value equivalent to the present one U.S. dollar. . . .

First, the agricultural production amounted to about ¥400 million, of which rice and sugar took up 75%. On the other hand, the industrial production amounted only to approximately ¥180 million. This was mainly sugar refinery production. Others included only electric power and cement. The rest [of the economy], including the mining, fisheries, service industries, transportation, payments for public servants, etc. totalled only about ¥120 million. . . . All combined, they amounted to about ¥700 million . . . about \$700 million in terms of present value.

The national product of Formosa in 1961 . . . amounted to about \$1,000 million . . . an increase of only \$300 million . . . only 43% in 25 years. The annual average economic growth rate had been only 1.7%. On the other hand, during the same period the population increased from about 6,000,000 to about 11,000,000, an increase of 83%. This means that the annual average growth rate was about 3.3%, which corresponds to twice the economic growth rate. In other words, the living standard in Formosa had declined at an annual rate of about 1.6%. (Liau 1963:1)

This is a very different picture from that commonly presented of the GMD economic trajectory. Much of the literature analyzing Taiwan's economic development depends all too heavily on official statistics, which are as suspect for early GMD years in Taiwan now as they were when they were published. Much of that literature begins their statistical series with 1950, ignoring the disastrous initial period from which ordinary people recovered only after another decade of minimal growth. Years of formal and informal interviewing about the conditions of life for working-class people convince me that Liau Kianlong — who sees progressive impoverishment — is more precise than K. T. Li — who simply sees stagnation. Both are substantially more accurate than the Joy Luck Club<sup>5</sup> of recent analysts who so tactfully ignore what happened to the economy when the GMD ran its least-encumbered tributary state.

#### LAND REFORM

Taiwan's famous land reform — which began with rent reduction in 1951, sold 864,583 acres of public and private land to 217,653 tenant households by 1958 (Cheng and Cheng 1961:81–82) and compensated the expropriated landlords with government bonds — is often held up as a model. Yet its conse-

quences need careful interpretation. Land reform had become a necessity, though not one that rural people then, or later, had the power to demand (Hsiao Hsin-huang 1981:292). War and the years since 1945 had reduced the countryside to unproductive poverty. Rents that had been controlled by the Japanese increased sharply after the GMD takeover. George Kerr remarks, ironically, "The exorbitant rents being so handsomely reduced in 1951 had been exacted from the Formosan peasant *after* the Chinese took control in 1945" (1965:420).

A survey of farm income before land reform noted four "basic economic problems. Firstly, . . . most of the farm products produced by Taiwan farmers were consumed by farm families. Secondly, farmers were short of disposable cash income to buy manufactured goods, especially daily necessities. Thirdly, it was impossible for most farmers to make any systematic plans for permanent improvement of their farms. Fourthly . . . off-farm employment opportunities . . . to earn cash money were limited" (*Far Eastern Economic Review* 18 [1955]:730).

Although after the disastrous year of 1946 and before land reform there had been large percentage gains in agricultural output, there were few improvements in farming or in rural standards of living when compared to the realities of life under the Japanese. According to Fred W. Riggs (1952:110), the sweet-potato crop reached 2.36 million tons in 1951, compared to a peak of 1.77 million tons in 1937. Most of this increase was due to the unavailability of rice at affordable prices. Taiwan rice production under the Japanese depended on generous inputs of fertilizers and careful macrolevel management of irrigation that the GMD was unable to supply. People ate sweet potatoes instead — and resented the drop in their standard of living.

Although land reform significantly influenced Taiwan's potential for industrialization and certainly affected the economy and society in far-reaching ways, it had only limited success in creating a varied and productive agriculture and a prosperous life for the rural population. Martin C. Yang, surveying rural attitudes in 1970, provided an early, positive study of the social consequences of the reform. He observed that "in the minds of most farm people, 'living' meant food consumption. 'Good living' meant adequate and superior foods and 'poor living' meant the opposite." Ten years after land reform, of new owner-operators of family farms, 55 percent ate pure polished rice as their daily staple (27 percent had done so during the worst of GMD times), and 9 percent ate meat and fish with most meals (3 percent had done so just prior to land reform) (1970:275, 285, 286). Yang's study is full of such inconclusive "proofs" of the success of land reform as the following: "When former tenants were asked in the survey whether the improvements in their food consumption had any relationship to land reform, about 60 percent of the 1,250 households answered this question, and more than 90 percent of the answers were affirmative" (342–43). That is, only about one-half of the sample stated that they ate better because of land reform! Of the surveyed

5. Radical analyses of Taiwan's economy were rare until martial law was lifted; see Jan Lin 1989 for a strong and useful critique, and Ka and Selden 1986 for an insightful comparison of Taiwan with China.

1,250 former tenants, about 60 percent neither built nor repaired houses; nearly 60 percent of those queried as to whether land reform had affected the installation of electric light in their houses replied negatively (30, 349). Wang Sung-hsing and Raymond Apthorpe attribute most of the post-land-reform improvements to nonfarm and remittance income from young family members in outside industry (1974:13-14). By the mid 1960s, it is generally agreed, agriculture had begun to stagnate, and from an export point of view, to become "a net drain on the economy" (Thorbecke 1979:139; see also Ho 1978:155).

Some difficulties in agriculture resulted from GMD policies that lay outside the sphere of land reform proper. A striking and little-studied example was the rape of Taiwan's virgin forests, including reckless cutting of cypress and other logs of one to two meters in diameter, each with a market value of several thousand postwar dollars. After 1949, according to the pseudonymous Lim Simtai, GMD officials in control of Taiwan's Ministry of Forests allied with military rulers, "in preparation for their moonlight flitting in case their stay in Formosa should become precarious," deforested whole mountainsides (1964:8). They justified what were almost certainly black-market sales to Japan and Korea as necessary to national defense. On one occasion, they insisted on procuring several dozen thousand board feet of cypress for military use in Quemoy and Matsu. When a responsible Taiwanese forestry official argued for the use of less valuable wood and for precautions against erosion and flooding in Taiwan's mountainous interior, he was told to "shut up" — and the logging proceeded. The official, Mr. Khu Khimtung, who proved extremely resistant to military demands for timber, apparently was assassinated in 1957. The fearful predictions of well-trained Taiwanese forestry officials appear to have come true in the disastrous floods of 1959 and 1960 (Lim Simtai 1964:10-12).

Although land reform enabled a few landlords to prosper as industrial capitalists on the stocks they received in compensation for giving up their land, many of them became small family farmers. Landlords were compensated for property in excess of 7.2 acres. Seventy percent of the compensation was in land bonds (which paid 4 percent annual interest over ten years) and 30 percent was in stock in four state enterprises (Taiwan Cement Corporation, Taiwan Pulp and Paper Corporation, Taiwan Industrial and Mining Corporation, and Taiwan Agricultural, and Forestry Development Corporation, which became joint public/private corporations thereafter); the bonds and stock were valued at a rate of two and one-half times the annual yield of the fields surrendered. Because paddy fields were worth four to six times annual yield, Samuel P. S. Ho calculates a net wealth-redistribution effect of about 13 percent of the 1952 gross national product (Ho 1978:268); also, the fact that land-bond interest was far below market value resulted in substantial wealth redistribution among Taiwanese.

Land reform also affected professional and business families. Kerr notes that

for thousands of [former landlord] Formosans the Land-to-the-Tiller program brought a sharp reduction in their modest standards of living. . . . before 1945, . . . there were many who had enough income to support them in comfort at home, to invest in small shops or businesses in the towns, and to send bright sons and daughters on to higher schools. . . . Many suspect that the program was designed as much to destroy the emergent middle class (the class which produced the leaders of 1947) as it was to aid the landless peasant. (1965:420)

With land reform, rich petty-capitalist Taiwanese nearly vanished, but owner-operators grew in numbers. Land reform eliminated many landlords and tenants, turning both into owner-operators of farms, shops, and factories. The formerly rich, ruined economically or politically or both, took jobs as cram schoolteachers and in small businesses. The most important long-term result of reform was the expansion of the owner-operator segment of the petty-capitalist class.

#### 1960S TO 1980S: WHAT TRIBUTARY LIBERALIZATION BOUGHT IN PROSPERITY SETTLEMENT

In 1959, embarrassed by the apparent successes in China of the Great Leap, pressured by mounting population, and threatened with a cutoff of U.S. aid, the GMD altered its economic regulations to admit foreign capital. Foreign capitalists, however, were slow to feel the charm of this two-time-loser government. Only in the mid 1960s did change begin to affect the lives of ordinary people. The coming boom was based on three stimuli: foreign capital (which operated relatively freely), the world's first export-processing zone, and new state spending on infrastructure. Corporate development inside and outside of the zone was closely managed by officials, who offered factories, land, transport facilities, duty-free status for raw materials, energy, procedural convenience, and labor peace in return for capital, raw materials and technology. Zone products were for export only, and its manufacturers did not subcontract out to lesser shops. They provided short-term, low-wage, low-skill jobs for young people and for the small businesses the new workers patronized. The opening into Taiwanese society for roughriding capitalism's typical effects was narrowed by state power and parental decision making over the new young laborers.

The post-1960s liberalization has been amply documented. It brought many positive consequences for the majority of islanders. Yet it should not be overpraised, anachronized, or attributed to the leadership of a few elite actors. As the previous section makes clear, people were worse off by the end of the first twenty years of GMD rule than they had been before the war, if only because petty-capitalist desperation for home-raised labor had fueled a demographic explosion. Rather than repeat statistics about the tightly controlled "liberalizing" decades

from the mid 1960s to the mid 1980s, I offer an ethnographer's description of the material circumstances of daily life in a Taibei neighborhood of petty-capitalist and laborer households. What reached the populace, I would argue, tells the quality of the development.

From September 1968 to January 1970 I lived on the fringes of a two-hundred-household neighborhood I call Prosperity Settlement, a pseudonym for a submerged village fast becoming just one more long block of Roosevelt Road near the city's expanding boundary. Though well situated for transport and small business since early Japanese times, my urban neighbors differed little in their consumption standards from middling rural folk: dirt floors; outdoor privies; cooking on tiny charcoal pots; cold-water hand laundry by the roadside; the most minimal use of electricity (a couple of low-watt bulbs to light their myopic children's studies; an electric fan for the comfort of guests; TV for the local elite). Only a few large stores downtown carried ready-made clothing — one size fit nobody. Food, bought daily, was fresh and delicious, better than before in quality and quantity, but elemental; one carried one's naked dinner fish home on the bus, hanging from a straw string. Except for cheap fabrics and washtubs made of government-monopolized petroleum feedstocks, most people owned virtually nothing they could not have purchased in the Ming.

I returned to live in the settlement for the academic year 1974–75. In the mid 1970s, and even in the early 1980s, Taiwan still held many neighborhoods in which people's lives had been less changed by liberalization than had Prosperity Settlement. What produced the steady earnings, savings, schoolings, and improvements in life these people were now able to obtain seemed mostly to come not from the opening to corporate capital but to increased state spending and to petty-capitalist enterprise itself.

#### CAPITALISM AND PETTY CAPITALISM UNDER LIBERALIZATION

The local owners of many of Taiwan's largest private firms make up an extremely influential class. The ownership and management relations of this upper crust has been analyzed by Lindy Li Mark (1972), Robert Silin (1972, 1976), and Numazaki Ichiro (1986, 1991). Through complex, particularistic, and predominantly patrilineal connections among private firms, and between private and public enterprises, this indigenous bourgeoisie has emerged as a self-conscious class with its own kin and cultural circles, "a network of socially-organized capitalists." Such firms, subordinated in major matters to state control, monopolize the resources (money capital, energy, petroleum feedstocks, and other raw materials) on which the small and medium businesses produce the export commodities for which Taiwan is famous (Numazaki 1991:335, 82). Their strength lies,

however, in the relationships among them — Numazaki calls them "alliances of partnerships" in "banana-bunch" shapes — and in their unwilling but ultimately productive division of labor with the state.

Are such firms and their regional precursors properly called capitalist, or can we perceive their dynamics more clearly by identifying them as petty capitalist? Have east Asians begun to outcompete Europeans and Americans because their congeries of systems is distinctive enough for its own label? In both Europe/North America and east Asia, large private firms differ in relations of production, management style, relationships of firms to states, and ideology. Yet it is equally true that the various Chinese societies — even China itself, at this writing — are deeply involved in the world capitalist system. Does engagement with a powerful world capitalism by definition convert class relations *within* specific countries into capitalist relations? Or are class identities sometimes best understood from a perspective inside those countries? The test may be a historical one: if our puzzling petty capitalists begin to act as independently of national interests and regulations as global capitalists now do, we may identify them as east Asian capitalists, pure and simple. As I have already made clear, however, I see these rich, powerful families as still very much constrained in tributary frameworks, and thus "petty" capitalists — no disrespect intended.

In the lumping and splitting of contemporary modes of production, it is helpful to consult David Harvey's influential interpretation of what is sometimes seen as an entirely new phase in advanced capitalism; he labels it "flexible accumulation." Harvey, too well grounded in theory to imagine more novelty than is actually present in "postmodernity," insists this is "a shift in the way in which capitalism is working these days" (1989:189, 112, 179). Flexible accumulation is a form of capitalism in Harvey's view, but he describes characteristics that I believe resemble those of petty capitalism in a number of ways: it is growth-oriented; in it, "growth is always predicated on a gap between what labour gets and what it creates"; it is "technologically and organizationally dynamic" (180); its "new production technologies and co-ordinating forms of organization have permitted the revival of domestic, familial, and paternalistic labour systems" and other "eclectic" labor practices" (187); in it, capitalism's inherent overaccumulation problem is managed at the macroeconomic level, in largely state circuits (181–82); and, in its east Asian form, "dominant or even subordinate classes have aggressively inserted themselves into" capitalism (183). Harvey barely acknowledges that flexible accumulation was inspired by, and often in direct imitation of, east Asian systems. "Just-in-time" industrial production depends on the small-family-firm subcontracting system; the pseudo-familistic relations of production in large and small firms are supported by patriarchally minded states. The "flexibility" of these systems comes from the capacity of large firms to exploit and lay off small ones, and of small firms to

manipulate both hired and family labor, sometimes through the "hirings" and "firings" of marriage and adoption. The West did not borrow petty-capitalist organizational mechanisms until east Asia began to outcompete Fordist production. For east Asians, "domestic, familial, and paternalistic labour systems" were not "revived" in the mid-twentieth century; they are an autochthonous east Asian mode of labor regulation. Some Third World "informal economies" increasingly overlap with flexible accumulation systems. One observer has suggested that a mid-twentieth-century rise in state spending and economic power is more responsible than capitalism for the emergence, reemergence, and/or persistence of these generic petty modes (Hart 1992). Such an interpretation fits easily into my paradigm of petty capitalism as a dialectical response to tributary relations before it became an adjunct of capitalism.

The fortune-cookie summary of the distinction between capitalism and petty capitalism still reads that, in capitalism, legally distinguished individuals confront the market; in petty capitalism, state-defined households do.<sup>6</sup> The Chinese tributary context shaped distinctive petty-capitalist practices that protect business people against powerful states; that, as one writer states, make use of labor where "the circulation of labour power as a commodity is subject to politico-legal constraints which restrict the individual's ability to determine the allocation of his/her labour power subject to the conditions of the market" (Miles 1987:32); and that depend on complex particularistic networks among firms and between petty-capitalist and tributary circuits as essential relations of production. These are as apparent in very small firms as in very large ones. Whether to identify big Taiwan companies as capitalist or petty capitalist must depend on definitions that best align with the totality of their relations of production, including the center of gravity of class hegemony.

An important difference exists between very large and very small Taiwan firms. Emerging only after the capitalist intrusions of the 1960s (Numazaki 1991:359), large firms form clusters that monopolize "upstream" production, that is, they supply technologically sophisticated raw materials principally to the island's small firms, which produce mainly for export. Numazaki notes that the "export sector is the only market that came close to [a] 'laissez-faire' market under the Nationalist rule" (1991:84). This elite is an upper class within the PCMP, different in many ways from the shirtsleeves, owner-operator, ideal-typical petty capitalist. Yet like the smaller owner-operators, Taiwan's tycoons run

6. A large and important literature explores the persistence in capitalist societies of kinship relationships that exploit people, notably married women, in ways that serve capitalist accumulation. Janet Thomas reviews this literature (1988), and Jean Larson Pyle (1990) offers an extraordinarily interesting case study of a Western, capitalist country (Ireland) that is positively Confucian in its structural positioning of women. Yet such tendencies are residual more than integral to capitalist functioning, and they do not apply to adult children.

family-headed businesses and depend heavily on informal networks of partnership and credit rather than on law and the state's banking system. This says to me that they do not believe that they control the state. In the traditional Marxist exaggeration, a capitalist class obliges the state to act as its executive committee. Chinese petty capitalists relate to the state as they would to a powerful gang running the local protection racket. Can we say that these networking financiers, industrialists, and merchants are capitalists because of their connection with world capitalism, but that their class power is insufficient to convert Taiwan's tributary system to a capitalist one? If we do, has the analysis become more precise, or merely more sophistical? Identifying Taiwan's entrepreneurial elite as capitalist or petty capitalist does not concern me as much as understanding Chinese social formations as wholes, and as seeing more clearly the continuing role of owner-operator petty capitalists as a large, productive, and essential class, structurally resistant to both proletarianization and gender equality.

Like all classes, petty capitalists come into being through interaction with other classes. Petty capitalists are both workers and owner-employers. Most sons and daughters of the petty bourgeoisie work, in their youth at least, for their own families, for other petty-capitalist families, or in large-scale industry and commerce (Gates 1979; Stites 1982; Harrell 1987; Niehoff 1987; Salaff 1988; Skoggard 1993). The occupational goal of many of these young people is to have a small business of their own; many, by their thirties or forties, attain it. The petty-capitalist class reproduces itself, but it contributes as well to a part-time proletariat that serves big industry.

Petty capitalists' relationships with their nonkin hired workers have been explored, but much remains to be learned (Salaff 1988; Chen Ping-chen [in press]; Shieh Gwo-shyong 1992; Ka 1993; Skoggard 1993). Workers form a continuum from unpaid sons who are future owners through completely unrelated persons who are harshly exploited. Membership in such household work groups offers experiences of both exploitation and protection, the mixture always more personalistic than that of corporate capitalism. Wages are often lower than in the largest factories, and surroundings more unpleasant, yet the "family-like" atmosphere owners profess to encourage is not entirely a fiction. Employers who hold workers to long hours and extraordinary effort to meet a deadline can sometimes be generous about time off for family emergencies and the like. Working in a small enterprise can often shorten commuting times and lessen transportation costs. Often meals are supplied at the workplace. Young women workers are probably more secure against sexual harassment in a shop where the owner's relatives come and go than on a larger, more impersonal shop floor. And in such small businesses, the alert young worker has many chances to learn her employer's skills and business secrets against the day when she may start her own business.

Such personalism is partly a matter of scale. Impersonality between owner and worker almost necessarily characterizes the wage relationship in large capi-

talist firms. Capitalist corporations often are laced tightly at the top with kin and other intimate ties, but these do not extend far down the layers of hierarchy. Nor do workers always want them to. Western labor history stresses the narrowing of the connection between capitalist and proletarian as conducive both to greater exploitation by capital and greater "liberty" by labor (E. P. Thompson 1966). The personalism that seems inherent in top levels of capitalist corporations encompasses all the personnel of owner-operator businesses. In them, hired hands, family workers, and household-head bosses play off personalism and rationality to very different ends.

The newness of large-scale industry in Taiwan, the pattern of individual movement into and then out of the wage-labor work force, and the relative ease with which families can establish small businesses make the distinction between petty capitalist and proletarian an extremely permeable one. It remains more an analytical device than a sharp line of objective demarcation; subjectively, there is little that could be described as class consciousness to separate the two. For some purposes, it is appropriate to lump those who labor on their own or others' small capitals as "working class." As is suggested below, however, the political visions that move this Chinese "working class" are remote from those associated, at least ideally in the West, with a proletariat.

Contemporary Taiwan petty capitalists owe their existence to both the tributary and the capitalist segments of the economy, producing and distributing goods and services the state and large private enterprises have not wanted or been able to capture. Big business, whether state or private, has readier access to large pools of capital through the formal banking institutions, international loans, and so forth. It can offer labor slightly higher wages because of the greater capital intensiveness of its production methods. It is logical to expect that small capitals would be swallowed by big ones, a process resulting in production monopolies, proletarianization, and the near-disappearance of petty capitalism; indeed, this disappearance has been regularly predicted by analysts on both left and right for decades. Yet in Taiwan, as in Hong Kong, Singapore, and elsewhere in Chinese east Asia, it has not occurred. Petty capitalism facilitates the embrace with capitalism while making that intercourse less like rape. Given the right political-economic environment, petty capitalists have proved themselves good at competition with foreign firms, of production of both simple and complex goods, of effective import-export activity, of creating flexible financial institutions, and of accumulating capital in a pattern in which very large numbers of families can participate.

Petty capitalism can also grow despite capitalist competition because the state both supports its institutions and provides it with a market alternative to that supplied by capitalist production. Petty capitalists produce not only in tandem with capitalism and for a proletariat, but also for a huge pool of state employees who do not make competing products. State workers, through their purchases of

petty-capitalist commodities, circulate the taxes from which they are paid to small-capital owners in a very large proportion of their daily spending — in housing, food and clothing, entertainment, local travel, and the purchase of consumer durables made in small factories. Hairdressing, barbering, tailoring, house repair, medical care, and a multitude of other services, privately provided, support petty-capitalist households by the thousands on money earned from state-employee spending. Although these payments come largely from taxes, petty capitalists themselves are especially skilled at evading taxation.

Petty capitalists have created a circulatory loop or eddy in the island-wide economy which prevents the direct unilinear extraction of wealth from the populace by tributary and capitalist modes of production. Dependence on a tributary mode alone puts petty capitalists in peril of an ever-increasing competition for fixed resources, as was the case in late-imperial China. But in Taiwan, the GMD was relatively rich, and the state sector enormous, with additional income from U.S. aid for decades. This configuration gave petty capitalists the opportunity to proliferate even during the first twenty years of GMD rule. With the intrusion of foreign capital, their opportunities expanded.

Capitalists and petty capitalists made use of each other, but they also competed vigorously for the new wealth that was being created. In Taiwan, unlike in Pakistan or the Philippines, the working classes and their institutions were able to keep, circulate among themselves, and reinvest a good deal of that new wealth locally. In this, they resembled their Chinese ancestors who so often baffled foreign attempts to scoop up millions of customers. A strong, though to economists invisible, factor in Taiwan's relative prosperity and income equality was its small businesses, along with the wider community institutions that enabled them to survive in an economy apparently dominated by the GMD, the United States, and Japan.

Petty capitalists have not simply held their own against incorporation into the formal sector. They have actively sought to participate in capitalist expansion, but on their own terms. Their efforts have resulted in accumulation of capital, in the increase in the size and number of small businesses, in higher living standards for themselves and related classes, and in the retention within Taiwan's economy of a greater proportion of the wealth its people have created.

Reasons for the effectiveness of petty capitalism are hinted at in official attacks on it mounted in the 1950s and 1960s. In those years, many Chinese intellectuals followed Western views of their own society so closely that they mistook strengths for weaknesses. Before the growth of the 1960s was evident, small businesses and social institutions were repeatedly discounted as backward and harmful. Industrial economies, in the view of mid-century mainstream economists, were to be built from the top down. One Chinese writer, citing Sun Yat-sen as authority, urged the policy of using "copious foreign capital, highly trained experts, ultramodern techniques, so that China can be industrialized in a whole, rapid,

and highly developed way" (Hsu Yung-Shu 1954:21). Small enterprises were seen as wasteful and inefficient, not likely to be of use in achieving the real goals of capitalism. In 1954, Taiwan's 12,000 to 13,000 private (hence, at that time small) enterprises were written off in a long discussion of public versus private enterprise as "with very few exception, nothing but family industries with shabby equipment and backward production" (*Industry of Free China* 1954:1). In 1959, K. T. Li, Taiwan's most famous liberalizing technocrat, analyzed the effect of Taiwan's social environment in these terms:

[The society is] affected by many traditional concepts and practices which tend to hamper economic development. . . . Most entrepreneurs in Taiwan lack an enterprising and risk taking spirit which is essential to pioneering a new industry. . . . They have little desire to improve their material life by raising productivity. . . . In an agricultural society, cooperation in production is limited to that within the family circle . . . and the organization of many enterprises is limited to the sole-proprietorships or partnerships within the family circle. Only a few are organized in the form of a corporation. This is a big stumbling-block on the road toward developing large-scale enterprises. . . . [Consumption for social prestige] includes extravagant festivals and construction of pompous ancestral shrines, temples, villas, and tombs. It seriously curtails the accumulation of capital for productive purposes. (K. T. Li 1959:9-10)

Mr. Li proved to be wrong on all points, as we now know.

#### FINANCING PETTY CAPITALISM

Much of Taiwan's economic achievement is attributable directly to the capacity of petty capitalists to mobilize both to produce *and* to keep what they accumulate from falling into the hands of either the state or the multinationals. They have done so through both persistent tax evasion and a complex petty-capitalist business practice that follows closely the list of activities K. T. Li damns in the quotation above. The kinship, informal financial arrangements, and folk religion that have contributed to Taiwan's economic success have been brought into being by people selecting from a repertoire of custom, shaping parts of it for new purposes, and abandoning other parts to the past. These institutions contain new elements as well as old, though the sense of newness quickly fades as innovation achieves, in turn, the status of custom.

Tax evasion is an inherent part of normal petty-capitalist business dealings; it is the *raison d'être* of household-scale production for market. Unlike those who are paid by large corporations, and unlike all but the largest corporations themselves, petty capitalists expect to be able to shelter most of their profits from taxation. They keep no books or keep two sets of books, pay in cash, and depend on

family and employees to be close-mouthed with strangers. Taiwan has what may be the world's largest underground economy, which, the *Economist* says "adds 25-30% to the official GNP figure. A foreign economist says it is more like 30-40% . . . [because] surveys suggest that 15-20% of export earnings are uncounted because of double invoicing, and 7-8% of manufacturing output is undeclared. Farmers, of course, never have a good harvest." Services are even bigger tax evaders, including the informal financial services that operate on personal ties. "In 1985 only a fifth of the government's revenue came from income tax; it collected more from customs duties. Taxes of all kinds produced only 60% of revenue that year (the rest came from things like profits of public-sector companies). . . . last year [1987] the proportion supplied by taxes fell to 50%." The author of the report argues the difficulty of taxing a "people who have had centuries of experience at evading tax collectors." This is in large part because "most . . . industrial output comes from the family-run firms that account for 99%" of Taiwan's companies and "the family business [is] an organism perfectly adapted to tax evasion" (13 March 1989:54).

Careful saving of all profit may supply all of a small firm's needs for money, but credit eases temporary difficulties and permits expansion. Foreign visitors to Taiwan during the early GMD period frequently commented on how effectively the Taiwanese were excluded from access to local bank credit through the centralized and discriminatory banking practices of the time. Ethnic stereotypes emerged to justify this unequal treatment: in 1974, a young American vice president of a major U.S. bank told me — with a straight face — that Taiwanese in banking were worse at accounting, less able to see the "big picture," more reticent, and "less intelligent" than Mainlanders. Taiwanese entrepreneurs who might formerly have gone to Japanese banks for credit had little choice but to depend on the informal means of access to capital on which the peasantry and smallest household businesses were accustomed to depend.

Even in the 1980s, moneylenders, friends, and kinfolk were the main sources of cash for small petty capitalists (Gates 1991a) as they had been for those described earlier by De Glopper (1972, 1979), Mark (1972), Silin (1972), and Tang (1978). In the 1970s, trusted borrowers paid about 6 percent a month. The lenders thus made more than banks did, but the loan was risky if the lender had poor judgment, for no one thought it feasible to take an absconder to court to recover a loss. Interest-free loans are rare: because there are many profitable ways to invest even small sums, all parties are well aware that such a loan costs the lender money.

The lending club (a common form in Taiwan is the *biao hui*), well known in many Chinese communities, is the characteristic way of borrowing from relatives and friends for whom the direct charging of interest would be an embarrassment. The person needing cash asks a dozen or so people to contribute equal proportions of the necessary sum, which she then may use. The following month, mem-

bers again contribute similar sums and bid an interest increment for the right to take the total pot. Interest from the highest bidder is distributed to all participants who have not yet received the lump sum. This process is repeated monthly until all members have had a turn to take the pot. The last member (like the initiator) gets the use of the money free — without having to bid and pay interest. This system, cheap and flexible, is very popular, providing the cash for school tuition or ceremonial purposes as well as the capital for small enterprises. Many people belong to several *hui* simultaneously as a courtesy to friends, a way of maintaining a good credit rating, and simply for profit. These loans too are quite unprotected by the legal system. In 1974, several Prosperity Settlement families were left with large losses when a Mainlander dressmaking family, which had achieved an unusual degree of integration in the community through its sponsorship of religious rituals, decamped at night, abandoning its large *hui*. People were angry, but did nothing.

Extending credit to customers is important to many small businesses. Credit is granted generously to frequent and reliable customers but quickly cut off, even for neighbors, when they are “hard” in repaying. When rice-milling shops were common — they processed and sold the essential daily staple — they often gave credit widely in their neighborhoods, as small grocery stores still do. The shops in turn require credit of their suppliers, as do artisans and other productive enterprises. One observer notes that *xinyong* (*hsin-yung*), a reputation for probity, is

... a firm's most valuable asset. People say that to start a business one needs capital, but capital isn't enough. One must have *hsin-yung*, and to have *hsin-yung* one must know people, have a good reputation with some set of people such as the members of one's trade. Similarly, when a business fails, as often happens, the failure is described as the result of a loss of *hsin-yung*: “If someone, for whatever reason, can't pay his bills when they are due, he immediately loses his *hsin-yung*. No one will advance him any more money or goods, and his creditors start demanding immediate repayment. That's the end — he goes bust.” (De Gloppe 1972:304)

Pawnshops are common and crowded with articles ranging from electric guitars to motorbikes, though their disadvantageous rates assure that few patronize them for business capital. More useful are the ubiquitous goldsmiths, who both buy and sell the high-carat gold for wedding and childbirth gifts, votary offerings to gods, and the near-obligatory flashy jewelry of the successful petty capitalist. Although money secured in gold does not necessarily grow in value, it is extremely liquid and, of course, easy to hide: from the tax official, one's wife, or one's mother-in-law. Goldsmiths for many years also served as Taiwan's black-market foreign-exchange service, where hard currency might be obtained without government interference.

Petty-capitalist internal financing has grown in the prosperous 1980s into an informal money market that lies halfway between the sleazier end of finance capitalism and a crap shoot. Fortunes have been made and lost on Taipei's recently created stock market, treated much like a lottery, and in such semiunderground investment houses as Homey.

These systems are essential to capitalizing and operating many of the family-run enterprises that make up such a large part of Taiwan's economy. Taiwan's PCMP has been built up, in large part, through such widely distributed means of access to capital and credit. To participate requires trust, however. Preexisting ties of long coresidence, kinship, status as fellow workers, an introduction by a trusted mutual friend, and/or the conspicuous display of wealth and rectitude are necessary preconditions for access to the large amounts of money that circulate through the informal sector.

#### FINANCE AND FOLK RITUAL

Folk religion, especially in its communal aspects, continues to be a major institution for the furtherance of petty-capitalist goals and for the expression of petty-capitalist symbolism (Skoggard 1994). Temples are intentionally costly, lavish “investments” in the other world for both individuals and collectivities. Most community religious celebrations are given on the occasion of the “birthday” of a temple's patron god, but a community need not have a temple to hold a celebration. In Prosperity Settlement, for example, an incense pot for a tripartite god known as Samgai Gong has circulated for generations among households of the neighborhood, its resident spirit honored by an annual community festivity, though they have not built him a temple (see H. Rohsenow 1973:129–30).

Essential to such festivals is the custom of feasting guests by community households. The numbers and energies of household women are often inadequate for the purchasing and preparation of these enormous meals, so cooks and assistants are hired, along with the tables, stools, and eating equipment. Heavy eating, drinking, and cigarette consumption are part of the hospitality urged on guests; local shops and nearby markets do a land-office business on the days before the feasts. Most villages and working-class urban neighborhoods have the opportunity to give a feast of this sort at least once a year. The parallel pattern of the U.S. retail trade's doing one-quarter of the year's business during the Christmas shopping season comes readily to mind.

Households that have had a prosperous year, and that have many friends, relations, and business associates, invite dozens of people to such events. Five or six tables of ten to twelve persons each was the norm for small-business families in the 1960s and 1970s. After a bad year, or if the family had other pressing needs, a table or two of intimates sufficed. In the 1980s, impressing and obligating a guest can be better done at an elegant restaurant, which now many hosts can afford.

But the ritual shape of community festivals still centers on feasts as the images of the circulation of wealth within the working-class community and on potentially profitable exchanges with both human and supernatural guests.

Temples are enduring social, political, and economic entities that must be built, maintained, enlarged, and redecorated. At minimum a temple must have an independent building with adequate space in front of it for worshipers to make offerings and watch opera performances. Temples to the Earth God and other minor gods are often tiny, a few square feet, but they are normally free-standing, with characteristic architecture. A temple contains an image of its patron god on an altar together with candles, an incense pot, and divining blocks. Beyond these essentials, the variations are endless, and the building, furniture, and equipment may be extensive and expensive. Dozens of images of the temple's primary god and numerous secondary deities in side chapels are common in larger temples, which may be grand architectural complexes covering a city block. Large busy temples have offices, clerks, incense-, amulet-, and souvenir-selling concessions, women volunteers who keep things tidy, a resident caretaker family, sometimes a religious recluse or two, a library, and headquarters for the businesses some large temples own.

Some towns, or parts of cities, are noted for particularly famous temples, which attract many daily visitors and huge crowds of pilgrims on festival days. A fringe of businesses — for the famous Beigang Mazu temple, almost the whole town — surround such temples: sellers of incense and spirit money, of fruit and cookies for offerings, of meals and lodging for travelers, of images and ritual goods for those who want a consecrated statue of the famous god made at the source.

Folk religion, obviously, is big business. Great quantities of ritual goods and services are produced and consumed annually by individual households and by temples as corporate bodies. At least two-thirds of the population of the island participate in the economic transactions connected with folk religion. Arriving at even a rough estimate of the quantity of resources that circulate through these channels is difficult. Government surveys of household expenditures considered it worthwhile to collect data on ritual expenses (Taiwan: Provincial Government, Bureau of Accounting and Statistics [various years]). Their figures underestimate actual expenses because such expenditures are well known to be unpopular with the government and because the frequent small costs for incense, special foods, and visits to temples are easily forgotten. Temple records are very closely held (A. Cohen 1979) precisely because the receipts are often large. Some of these funds may be used for private profit by temple managers, as people commonly allege. But part of the record is either public or fairly easily calculated. Temples inform the most casual visitor of their own popularity and economic significance through public listings of major expenses on their walls. Ability to attract wealth is the best evidence of efficaciousness of the temple's deities: such displays are necessary advertising.

Temples and their contributors may want to display evidence of their efficaciousness, but caution too is called for. Early in this century, John Shyrock noted that a temple in Anhui "came under the suspicion of the authorities for some reason, so the officials simply took the list of contributors and confiscated their land" (1931:29). I do not know of a similar case in Taibei, but the managers of at least one extremely prosperous temple were told by the city government in the late 1960s that they must spend more of their income in visible and socially useful ways. The temple built, filled, and now supports a multistory library, open to the public, to meet this obligation.

Taibei City lists twenty-one temples in Guting and Wanhua districts (Taibei City Government 1974). These are strongly petty-capitalist areas, laid out along the river bank and a Japanese railway built in the 1930s from the oldest commercial part of the city out to the 1968 city boundary, by then heavily built up. Several temples date to the early 1700s; others have histories of well over one hundred years. One large temple was founded in 1954; many have been extensively enlarged and embellished since the late 1950s.

I surveyed seventeen temples in these two districts in the fall of 1980, noting all public evidence of expenditures: a donor's name on a pillar or incense burner; carved or pasted-up listings of donations in cash and kind. In a few, listings of temple incomes for scattered years were available. My field assistants and I interviewed responsible people at each of these temples.<sup>7</sup> Some of them supplemented the written data with helpful oral accounts of expenditures and incomes not otherwise commemorated. The figures are underestimates, and probably serious underestimates, of temple cash flows, and they unavoidably mingle income and fixed assets.

Of the seventeen, six temples recorded expenditures of over NT\$1,000,000 (U.S.\$25,000) since the late 1950s, with most of the expenditures dating from the 1970s.<sup>8</sup> The total for these six was very close to NT\$9,000,000 (U.S.\$225,000). This figure does not include the cost of a four-story temple built in 1954, which had no public records. It relies on a conservative estimate of NT\$1,000,000 from the large and wealthy Longshan Temple, for which my records are regrettably imperfect. Another NT\$250,000 (U.S.\$6,250) was spent on four relatively small temples, whose managers explained some of their financial arrangements to me. In the 1970s, three more small temples in this group spent NT\$200,000 (U.S.\$5,000) on improvements such as a second story, decorated roofs over the entryways, stoves (*jinting*) for burning spirit money, stone walls, and toilets. Expenses associated with annual celebrations, daily incense, wages for clerks and watchmen for the smaller temples would easily bring the total figure above NT\$12,000,000 (U.S.\$300,000). Similar expenditures since the late 1950s for the

7. Drs. Chang Hsun and Chang Hui-tuan, then students, did most of the arduous legwork for this task, for which I again thank them.

8. The NT\$ to U.S.\$ figures are calculated at the 40:1 ratio that prevailed up to the later 1970s.

bigger temples (including Longshan Temple) might bring the figure near to NT\$20,000,000 (U.S.\$500,000). Visits to small cities, towns, and villages throughout the island reveal similar activity everywhere.

Taipei has several other ritually active districts, and a total of two hundred registered temples (Taipei City Government 1974); there may well be twice as many additional unregistered ritual centers, including the semipublic altars of busy mediums. Li Yih-yuan calculates that there were over nine thousand temples (not including mediums' altars) in Taiwan in 1979, roughly double the number present seventeen years previously (1979:139).

Where do the large sums for building and ritual come from? In the past, they were collected by temple committees from worshipers for the expenses of gods' birthdays, to pay for opera, special ritual services, firecrackers, and the like, and in connection with building or redecorating projects. An informant told me that "people like to see their names listed as a worthy believer in the god on a pillar or a plaque, and so they give." Most temples sold incense and accepted voluntary contributions from visitors and, as now, temple committees took the responsibility of footing the bills or of persuading wealthy families to do so.

Since the mid 1970s, however, two ritual practices — *baidou* and the setting up of *ping'an deng* — have greatly increased the efficiency of drawing revenues. *Baidou* is a ceremony associated with folk Daoism, in which families pay a temple to set out measures (*dou*) of raw rice on an altar in their names. Each contains a cluster of symbolic implements (a mirror, a knife, a coin, a lamp), and is offered to the temple's god to the accompaniment of liturgical chanting by ritually pure specialists and (often) volunteers. After the appropriate number of days of esoteric ceremony, the rice is given to the family (symbolically, in a tiny red packet containing a few grains). It is mixed with domestic rice and eaten for the protection it may confer. A virtually identical practice, called *fahui*, is performed in temples identified as Buddhist. Although theologically distinguishable, as fundraising devices they are identical. There are elaborate symbolic rationales for *baidou* and *fahui*, but their fund-raising function is their fullest explanation. As a young nun told me, "People are so busy these days that they don't have time to come to temples so much. We couldn't manage here if we didn't *paidou*. It's convenient for them and for us; we even use computers."

Many popular temples, most of which in the past did not perform *baidou*, now do so, some three or four times annually.<sup>9</sup> Printed invitations are sent to former contributors, and some temples have computerized mailing lists of thousands. Although one may offer any amount in return for having one's name

9. Tracking *baidou* over twenty-five years in Taipei has made me intensely alert to the lability of "tradition." At temples where I have observed the yearly round of ritual events with some care over many years, watching them add, and then expand, *baidou*, I have been authoritatively told that the custom has always been followed since the founding of the temple.

placed on a rice measure, the standard sum in 1980 was NT\$300 (U.S.\$7.50). In one medium-sized temple in the fall of 1980, the largest *dou* represented a donation (prominently labeled) of NT\$10,000 (U.S.\$250). The total collected on that occasion was NT\$169,400 (U.S.\$4,235). Another less active temple of about the same size took in NT\$75,000 (U.S.\$1,875) at that time; another large and very popular temple received nearly NT\$300,000 (U.S.\$7,500) for its fall *baidou*, temple keepers estimating that this was about average for the thrice-yearly event.

The expense to the temple for these rituals is minimal, except for the initial purchases of containers (old ones are often wooden, and beautifully carved) and symbolic objects. (The manager of one temple that had just begun to *baidou* drew criticism for his use of plastic toy swords in some of the *dou*.) Much of the chanting is done by pious women volunteers rather than paid specialists, so that most of the contributions represent income.

A second way in which temples gain income and increase contact with a body of supporters is through the setting up of *ping'an deng* — "peace" or "stability" lanterns. These are conical structures, up to eight feet tall, covered with tiny openings, each containing a gilt image of Buddha lit with a small electric bulb. Below each is a space for a name. For NT\$300 a year, a household or person may have a name inscribed; the named person will receive the benefit of a set number of recitations of protective and prosperity-enhancing prayers. Some *ping'an deng* revolve and emit taped prayers automatically instead of absorbing them from chanting specialists; this practice is considered tacky by the pious. Some temples have as many as four large lanterns, with thousands of names; the spillover lines walls near the altars. Like *baidou*, this is an inexpensive way to attract income for the temple. It also encourages identification of the worshiper with that particular temple, thereby regularizing and stabilizing the income.

The urban population of working-class Taiwanese — and some Mainlanders — still relies on supernaturals for help in this world, but shows decreasing interest in the ritual forms of community religion that require public participation. *Baidou* and the setting up of *ping'an deng* have been spreading to temples that did not formerly offer them, and expanding in those that did. Temples to minor and specifically local spirits, such as the Earth God or powerful but impure ghosts, do not perform these rituals. Many temples, however, have seized on these virtually cost-free methods of retailing supernatural benefits in the interest of expanding temple revenues. Many believers now make their bargains with the gods without the trouble of carrying heavy baskets of chicken and liquor to a crowded temple on what may very well be a working day.

The most interesting question, however, is what temples do with their money. It is a question I cannot answer in detail. The answer must be of some importance, however, as temple managers are so uniformly unwilling to discuss it. Leisured old gentlemen who will spend any amount of time expanding on popular ideology, iconography, and folk ritual fall silent on the subject of earnings (see

A. Cohen 1979). Occasional facts escape: local representatives of the GMD get a cut in return for protection from government interference; some temple managers divert funds to private uses, using temples as unofficial (and unremunerated) banks; temples invest funds as moneylenders, rentiers, and service providers. A famous example of the latter is Mujia's famous Zhi Nan Gong, which owns a bus franchise and a chain of daycare centers in addition to its profitable pilgrims' hostel. In other words, the wealth accumulated by temples is used as Taiwan's petty capitalists always use wealth: for investment within petty-capitalist "informal" circuits. Temple managers are petty capitalists in another way: their reticence represents the never-ending struggle to make money without having to fork over a cut to the government.

The capacity of Chinese folk religion to soak up and circulate capital that might otherwise fall into the hands of the state or the multinationals is an important element in the petty capitalists' resistance to the hegemony of these other modes of production. Money spent on a BMW goes to Germany and is lost to Taiwan; money spent on altar furniture goes to a craftsman in Lugang, who will lend it out again. Money banked in a publicly organized corporation is taxed, and perhaps ends up in an official's retirement house in Costa Rica; money funneled through a daughter's dowry into a dentures-making machine is off the books and returned to the local economy.

Much could be said about the organizational and ideological roles of Taiwan's folk religion in assisting and validating petty-capitalist processes, and one can criticize the more egregiously exploitive practices to which those processes tend. One could gloss folk religion as the principal sphere of civil society on that island. For present purposes, I will conclude only that folk religion, along with the patterns of petty-capitalist business practice and personalistic forms of organization criticized by K. T. Li, has not been a drag on Taiwan's economy but rather has been a brake on the extractive capacity of the state and multinational corporations. Both have created a retentive sponge for accumulated wealth, and a necessary if not sufficient motive force of entrepreneurial action. Without the petty-capitalist social complex of which folk religion is a part, tributary economies stagnate and capitalism often produces only underdevelopment for local people. Through the operation of petty capitalism's characteristic form of social reproduction, the other two modes active in contemporary Taiwan do well, but so do petty capitalists.

#### THE POLITICS OF PETTY CAPITALISTS

The late 1970s and the 1980s saw sharp political contradictions in Taiwan: the most blatant state violence to have occurred in decades was accompanied by a strong and now successful push for legal and electoral reforms. Ascendant petty-capitalist politics need to be read against a background of significant political-economic change.<sup>10</sup>

By the mid 1970s, the capacity of state-managed production had expanded to the point where it had more to contribute to the economy than did the trickle-down of tax and foreign-aid moneys. State enterprises were profitable, and state-built infrastructure improvements were used by everyone. By the mid 1980s, the twenty-seven state enterprises had assets in excess of a billion dollars (*China Post* 3 January 1986:4). Productivity had given the former tributary mode real social value. It had also increased its power, making the state increasingly independent of the people. In consequence, as petty-capitalist pressure for a political voice became stronger, the state became less inclined to resist that pressure by the thuggish methods of the past. Between the mid 1970s and the mid 1980s, however, some thuggery occurred, shocking Taiwan and the world. Scandals at many U.S. universities erupted over GMD political surveillance of students. A Taiwan-born professor at an American university was found dead on the campus of National Taiwan University after a secret-police interrogation. Those attending a Gaoxiong rally in support of a political magazine were badly frightened and provoked by surrounding riot police into street fighting; many political activists were jailed in the aftermath of this rally, and the wife, mother, and daughter of one of them were murdered at home. The author of a book critical of Jiang Jingguo was gunned down in his California driveway; the trials of his murderers revealed close links between Bamboo Union gangsters, Taiwan military intelligence, and the GMD.

These were signs of a real struggle in the party. The right-wing made up of the Garrison Command of high military officials, the secret police, the gangs, and the troglodyte branch of the GMD still played by old rules that now shocked even their brothers-in-arms. But with U.S.\$76 billion in foreign reserves by 1991 (*Free China Journal* 25 April 1991:1), the GMD state no longer needed such strongarm methods. It began to give way more gracefully to the powerful movement that had begun as "outside the party" (*dangwai*) and evolved into the Democratic Progressive party (Minjindang). By 1988, the party was a successful de-facto opposition. Various smaller parties have also become active, many with platforms that differentiate them more sharply from the GMD than do Democratic Progressive party positions. Intellectuals launched a blizzard of journals and newspapers to debate the future. Among the opposition at least, the idea of democracy seems to have expanded beyond the age-old limits that in China proper constrain it to what one scholar calls "an institutionalization of the righteous official's duty to petition" (Pieke 1992:301).

The petty-capitalist majority now makes its voice heard through the newly free press and newly possible rallies and election campaigns. That voice is also heard in the conversations of ordinary people in shops and factories, during family evenings before the television set. It is presumptuous to offer more than speculations about these opinions — gathering such data is notoriously difficult and

10. Some of this material appears in Gates 1992.

subject to bias. Taiwan's scholars have begun to produce public-opinion data, but years of martial law and harsh repression have made ordinary people too cautious for their public statements to mean much. I summarize here the little I know of Taipei petty-capitalist political opinion as that is expressed in informal words and in newly invented political rituals.

Petty capitalists imagine their political future in contradictory ways. Most are ethnic Taiwanese or Taiwan-born Mainlanders; both agree that they want no economic unification with China; most want no special relationship at all with it. "We want to be like Switzerland," is a popular comment. "They are neutral, they have no worries about international politics, nobody tries to control them, and they just do business peacefully and successfully." In the 1980s, business people in Taiwan waxed rapturous about "all those customers" in China. They had in mind a vast hinterland of passive purchasers, not a reconstitution of a great Chinese state. Since the events at Tiananmen Square in the spring of 1989 and the subsequent squeeze on Chinese petty capitalism (Gates 1991b), Taiwan business people believe the risks to investments there are greater. Some philosophically take their money elsewhere. The real cowboys still go for broke with a great-uncle in Fujian or an old schoolmate in Sichuan.

Taiwan's independence from China having been achieved behind the leaders' backs some time ago, two grand political questions confront its people. One is the ethnic issue: can electoral democracy, which is making real progress, end Mainlander monopolies of key positions in the military, the government, and the state production sector? The unelected power of state and party apparatchiki still controls enormous resources on the island. Will voting enable the Taiwanese majority to get their share of what the state collects and distributes? Several generations of Taiwanese want their share, and want it very badly. Men (and a few women) who run successful businesses, who are pillars of local temples and voluntary associations, whose petty-capitalist credentials for public office are impeccable, have long smarted under ethnic discrimination. They want the public recognition, the right to move into the ruling class, and the perquisites that go with such a move. These are all things they might have had, they believe, had the Japanese stayed on, or had the Americans not supported the GMD, or had the GMD simply made a few more false moves. They rally to the opposition Democratic Progressive party, striving for a more liberal Taiwan. In political parades their desire to decapitate the GMD state is embodied by the heads of pigs — long a Taiwanese logo for Mainlanders — mounted on many floats. This is the thrust of political opposition to working-class people: government of Taiwanese, by Taiwanese, and, most definitively, *for* Taiwanese.

A second strand in recent opposition politics entangles the first, for the Taiwanese are not the only petty capitalists, and the Democratic Progressive party is not an organization only of this class; it includes Mainlanders and intellectuals who take seriously an additional question: how much of the bloated central gov-

ernment and military is in fact necessary to run a Taiwan that aspires to be Switzerland? How much of the tributary system should be dismantled altogether, and what parts redirected to social uses? What resources should the GMD be obliged to disgorge to the public treasury? What parts of that treasury should be privatized, and who will get the spoils? While intellectuals of many political persuasions debate these issues, the lack of coherent positions points up the extreme ambiguities of petty-capitalist politics.

Deploping state depredations and the more obvious malfeasances of international capital, petty capitalists nevertheless hold private property sacred. Protection for labor helps their children who work in factories but harms themselves as employers. With luck, their children will get out of factory work and become employers in their turn. A more welfare-oriented economy has no charms for them. They trust money in their own hands more than that pooled in the hands of a government that has long robbed them. They say, and act as though they believe, that any foreseeable new government would do the same. Petty capitalism is, after all, a response to a tributary economy. Its political stance is resistance, not initiative, except within its own well-connected circuits.

It is a mistake, however, to assume that this resistance argues that petty capitalists are demanding less commanding leadership and a dismantling of the tributary economy that creates such independent power. Taiwan political attitudes much resemble those of Western petty bourgeoisies who so easily fall for Führers, Iron Ladies, and movie stars. A great many petty capitalists depend on export markets: they want a strong state to negotiate for them against China, the United States, and Japan. They have learned, from school and from folk religion, that great political figures are different from the rest of us, possessing superhuman if not supernatural powers equipping them to lead.

Strong leadership requires resources. The petty capitalist already pays more taxes than she is willing to pay and has evolved a colossally successful system of tax evasion. She expects the leadership to battle IBM and Mitsubishi (as well as the Communists, if necessary) effectively, but not with her money. She does not want massive corruption and squeeze, though she assumes that bribes are occasionally necessary. Better leave the government with its own production income not drawn directly from her pocket. Stepping down the state's political-economic power would cause the state to lose international clout and capacity to smash labor and control class disputes. The factory owner who demands obedience and deference from her children and apprentices *must* believe in hierarchy, or her world and livelihood would collapse. The petty capitalist wants to be absolutely free to run her business in her own way, but wants as well a strong leader who can defend her from the vagaries of the international market and can keep "society" harmonious without her having to trouble herself about politics.

This very real dilemma is not well addressed in contemporary Taiwanese politics. It probably will not be until the ethnic question is resolved and native

Taiwanese are enfranchised for all elections, as they soon must be. A dominant Democratic Progressive party is no more likely to alter radically the tributary-petty-capitalist-capitalist tripod on which the political economy rests than is a more thoroughly indigenized GMD. And only the party that can get out the petty-capitalist vote can win honest elections in Taiwan for the foreseeable future.

Although Democratic Progressive party victories would have the result that more Taiwanese would live on the tributary system as elected officials, such victories would not result in radical changes in government direction. The more liberal wing of the GMD, which won the 1980s confrontation with the old guard by what appears to have been the slenderest of margins, is now preparing to pump U.S.\$300 billion into state-run development projects. If these projects succeed in expanding state-controlled infrastructure and production capacity, the GMD will have countered the petty-capitalist challenge and recovered the near-independence from popular pressure which seems always to have been its goal. Yet, taking the \$300 billion out of its sock for productive rather than military purposes could also create massive opportunities for petty capitalists — if popular pressure prevents it all from flowing to large private corporations. This new opportunity could do much to deflate the ethnic issue that has, thus far, brought the Democratic Progressive party its support. As usual, capitalism proper, especially when the capital is foreign, will gain too; but it will not win outright.

As genuinely electoral politics and active political participation become integrated into working-class life for the first time in Taiwan's history,<sup>11</sup> Taiwan's people will probably focus primarily on creating new political tools and on gaining expertise in their use. Although the underlying class interests of petty capitalists lean dangerously toward combinations of corruption and tyranny, the actual political practice of working-class people contains much that is democratic, egalitarian, and redistributive.

Under martial law in GMD Taiwan, which lasted until 1988, extremely tight control was exercised over the formation of organized groups, whether for study, for labor organization, for business, or for such trivia as flower shows. Only kinship and religious activities were in practice exempted from the extreme and frightening surveillance under which urban Taiwanese lived their lives. When we look for evidence of how ordinary people acted when they were free to organize themselves for public purposes, our best examples come from folk religion.

The scale and organizational effectiveness of these petty-capitalist rituals have already been stressed. With no encouragement from the government — indeed,

11. A historian might make an exception for the short-lived consequences in Taiwan of Japanese "Taisho democracy" in the 1920s and early 1930s. Farmers and workers helped to indigenize this movement in Taiwan, along with intellectuals. First the Pacific War and then GMD rule have nearly expunged it from popular memory.

with a government that tried hard, at one time, to abolish community ritual — people ran grand festivals, built handsome buildings, organized themselves into networks of local leaders with contacts all over the island. They raised money, they circulated it among members of their class, they supported a myriad of households in independence from either state or large capital-providing institutions.

They also embezzled a little, it is true. Leaders' tendencies to appropriate from the communal purse were — and are — kept in check, however, by many of the mechanisms through which ritual events are structured. Local men — sometimes women — of wealth and influence have a loud voice in temple affairs, but committees and heads of rotating celebrations are chosen by lot. A household head with the resources and the desire to participate can generally take a prominent role a few times in a lifetime. Accounts are kept, and certain kinds of accounts at least are made fully public. The atmosphere of community ritual planning is egalitarian: just try to stop interested old people from having their say on how things ought to be done. Groups who do not like what their community has done may secede ritually, giving their own god, ghost, or ancestor a try as a focus for an independent cult. Lists of donations to temples are correctly kept in order of size of donation; within each level, commoners and officials are listed without preference of rank. One observer notes that "what we see illustrated in the inscriptions is an organization that does not conform to the official class system, but tends toward equality and a form of democracy — as close to it as traditional China could possibly get" (Schipper 1990:414). That this is not a Fujian-Taiwan peculiarity is confirmed by Sichuanese researchers who describe village *pudu* ("universal salvation") ceremonies in the 1930s. Committees of village men "handle the registration of the dead and of the living sick, for whom prayers are being sought. They are arranged in order: first come, first prayed for, is the rule" (Treudley 1971:227). Historically, networks of related cults have linked localities that administrative practice separated. "Interregional problems could thus be settled directly and on a basis of equality" (Schipper 1990:414).

Chinese folk religion has a long history of antihierarchical, egalitarian tendencies. Attributing this to the egalitarianism of some Buddhist doctrines misses the point. Doctrine, unsupported by sanctions or experience, is likely to have little influence on practical matters. The Buddhist pressure toward vegetarianism has had very little effect on pork consumption. Ritual participation is specified as egalitarian because two major realities of commoner life in Chinese societies have been the misery entailed by tributary hierarchy and the opportunity to alleviate it offered by equality before the market.

Popular ritual mirrors (and, yes, perpetuates) the way Taiwan's petty capitalists do business. Buyers and sellers encounter crooks and charlatans, and everyone must look out for them. But a tremendous amount of business is done on trust. Business people form cliques, giving preference to those they know. Still, the Chinese appetite for widening the circle of acquaintances who might, some-

day, be useful combines graciously with generous hospitality and genuine sociability. Chinese people almost never forget or ignore a debt or a kindness to someone in their circle; a gift or a kindness opens such circles to almost everyone. Under conditions of harsh competitiveness, petty capitalism can have a meaner face, a "limited-good" or zero-sum-game mentality. Under the expanding conditions that have prevailed in Taiwan since the 1960s, however, one constantly senses a cheerful spirit of cooperation within the competition.

These are the political as well as the economic values that Taiwan's emerging leadership should seek to foster. They should not foster them through moralizing exhortation. Petty capitalists (and everyone but naive children and GMD pensioners) write off Confucian bombast for exactly what it is worth. They might, however, begin to build real democracy by decentralizing spending on genuinely local matters, delegating power to local communities to manage and maintain social services of their choice. They might turn the energetic interest in a wholesome environment into a grass-roots movement well enough organized to bring massive pressure to bear on the state and industry.

More radically, they might consider a broader public discussion of the family politics I often hear from working-class friends: that today's young people seem to be more filial if you don't beat them, threaten them, and govern them too strictly. "*Haizi pa ruan, bu pa ying*" ("Children are controlled better by kindness than by harshness") is often heard these days. The populace might decide to bite the bullet and begin to dismantle the intimate hierarchy that sets men over women, the hierarchy on which all others are modeled and which women increasingly resent. Taiwan's fledgling and still narrow feminist movement is expanding through the many women active in environmentalism as "the nation's homemakers." As activist mothers and wives try to get industrialists to clean up after themselves, women's role in politics moves from tokenism (Chou, Clark, and Clark 1990) to meaningful action.

To further their own democracy, Taiwanese people might well use more indigenous petty-capitalist institutions and rhetoric. Working-class people in Taiwan are well accustomed to raising money, organizing big projects, disciplining their members, providing community entertainment, and encouraging local membership and pride. Temples are already rallying places for Taiwanese nationalism; they would be fine places for the recruiting of volunteer ecological pilgrims from among older women and men, or for the centralization of recycling tasks for children. They have already been informally chosen as sanctuaries for political speeches and debate. In them, democratically inclined leaders urge that the old machine politics can be met by a new politics of involvement and, where necessary, confrontation. With luck, and with the strong tincture of democracy that economic expansion encourages, Taiwan may complete its transition from a tributary system to something very new, absolutely autonomous, but still very Chinese.

# II

## Re-creating the Tributary in China

Look at me with my Red Guard schoolmates. This one was taken when we went to Beijing to see Chairman Mao. You can see I was the real activist type, with my straight hair and plain clothes. We all carried Chairman Mao's little book. . . . We were all so certain that our ideas about China, about making revolution, were correct. . . . Now, society has changed so much. . . . Now everything seems reasonable, more natural. You can see that people are better off. But we really believed, then.

— Mo Moren, a Chinese intellectual, Chengdu, 1988

Why were we still enduring all this? Why couldn't the Chinese students take action as the Korean students had, or as the Burmese students were doing right then? — Liu Binyan, Chinese journalist, 1990

Chinese in this century, but especially in the decades since the 1949 revolution, have repeatedly externalized the political-economic contradictions this book sketches. The energetic and then overextended socialist model in the 1950s gave way to the cultivation of both state and private production in the 1960s, to the Cultural Revolution attempt to extirpate petty capitalism while fostering a single, collective mode of production, to the readmission of petty capitalism in the 1980s, to the post-Tiananmen reassertion of centralism. China-watching has been a game of very serious Ping-Pong for over forty years. Chinese as well as outsider "China specialists" have been baffled by the reversals of political-economic policy, as the quotations above suggest.<sup>1</sup> What is most striking

1. See Sulamith Heins Potter and Jack M. Potter's fine monograph, especially their concluding chapter, for an insightful and very different interpretation of "two complementary orientations towards . . . economic relationships" among Chinese people (1990:338). Huang Shu-min too has characterized recent motion in Chinese society as "the spiral road" (1989), indicating a directional dialectic.

about these reversals is that they were accomplished — at least until Tiananmen — with a very considerable degree of voluntary compliance on the part of the population.

Yes, there is a Chinese gulag; yes, the extravagances of both the Great Leap and the Cultural Revolution (the former far more than the latter) caused grievous harm to many millions. Chinese people are still much motivated by fear: fear of a personalistic legal system, of a network of informers, of officials dangerously removed from the consequences of their actions, and, always at base, of stupid or cruel economic decisions leading to hard years of hunger and lifetimes of loss. To underestimate these is to trivialize the epochal struggle of a richly complex people against dangers old and new. But the revolution was made, and was continued for decades, by people who seem to have supported much of what they were so forcefully led to do.

Self-interest was an important source of willingness to follow the latest political line. When China's leaders moved to rural collectivization, they offered incentives to those who joined, and disincentives to those who did not. Some communes were given special state aid to encourage others to adhere to policy. After 1978, when collective agricultural land was reprivatized under the responsibility system, some rural authorities gave low-interest loans to households willing to set up approved enterprises producing needed commodities. Political movements were almost always tied to economic issues, even when their rhetoric sounds empty of such content to Western ears. Political-economic policy always assumes that social relations are largely definable in political-economic terms. Chinese Marxism was not so aberrant as to ignore the power of the material to mold minds.

Yet one hears far more than greedy maximizing in the tales Chinese tell of the policy reversals they have participated in and, for that matter, in the debates Taiwan's people have over what a good society should be, and how to build one. The written record, formal interviews, and private conversations all reveal that at each change of policy in China a great many people were willing to give the latest vision a try. In admittedly diminishing numbers, Chinese people have displayed considerable enthusiasm for *both* public/collective and household-based endeavors. And, although many of these were supported by either state workers, say, or family farmers, a great many were supported, *seriatim*, by the same people. In moments of self-reflection, Chinese often express puzzlement about how their actions, their understanding, their feelings, and their politics could have changed so much under different policies.

One possible explanation may be that, with two modes of production as deeply entrenched guides, people could relatively easily shift from one fairly complete world view to the other. They did not have to be introduced to an entirely new ideology and moral stance when the political-economic wind changed. They simply needed to be reminded of the global implications of whichever model was

more salient at the moment. Tributary and petty-capitalist modes came complete with distinctive moral convictions, visions of the cosmos, kinship ideals and practices, contrasting patterns of production and exchange, and a millennial history of conflict and critique between them.

China's *ganbu* (ruling officials) and *laobaixing* (commoners) continue to reproduce modes of production which affect their encounters with socialism and capitalism. To argue this obliterates the line that first capitalist imperialism and then the Chinese revolutionary response to it drew across Chinese lives. The break after 1949 was real, but after forty years the fracture has knit. Even committed old revolutionaries look back with sorrow and surprise at the way their efforts have been "thrown away" (*The Guardian* 17 April 1990:6). The Chinese have allowed some of the worst aspects of their tributary heritage to contaminate the experiment that may yet become socialism.

China's rulers have labored under a double delusion, confusing feudalism with socialism and seeing indigenous Chinese petty capitalism as identical to, and as dangerous as, capitalism proper. Responsibility for continuities in modes of production can largely be laid at the door of the ruling class, but popular collaboration in reproducing the past should not be ignored. Western analysts contribute to the confusion as neoclassicists and Marxists alike assume that China has socialism because its leaders say so and that capitalism, in the short run, conquers all. The socialist experiment and the capitalist threat are easily conflated with past experience in tributary and petty-capitalist society; what is new about the historically more recent modes is hardly perceived through this dense and double ideological screen.

The continuities from past into present are maintained in two ways. More obviously, they stem from the repetition of behavior based on experiences of the past, a tendency strengthened by the natural conservatism of aging leaders at all levels. This is old-fashioned "cultural lag," the sort of automatic persistence with which "culture" or "tradition" is often credited. That inertia counts for something cannot, of course, be denied. Yet it is imperative to locate the sources of present behavior in present circumstances, in the actions of people as both victims and agents, in Helen Siu's felicitous phrase (1989). The continuities between the late-imperial and the postrevolution Chinas are not the result of persistent values and beliefs "acting" autonomously. They are rather the result of the persistence of political-economic structures for which revolutionaries failed to create alternatives. Such failures were due to insufficient social wealth, insufficient power in the new party to implement its purposes, and to insufficient imagination — to the immense difficulty of envisioning, or even identifying, the genuinely new.

Continuity is paradoxical in China; revolutionaries shook the world to sever the institutional ties that bound them to their past. The paradoxes are only apparent, however. Long-established patterns of tributary political economy have

been permitted to continue unopposed, and were even strengthened under the new system, as they have been in Taiwan under GMD control. Official support of kinship hierarchies and state monopoly of the best forms of employment have combined to pressure people into petty-capitalist responses. While Taiwan's rulers have pushed the majority of the population into petty capitalism, China's official ambivalence to household ownership alternated periods of tolerance with periods of sharp restriction. The Chinese segued into socialism with their prior commitment to tributary-style kinship nearly intact.

#### STRENGTHENING HOUSEHOLD HIERARCHIES

For a glorious moment during the land reform of 1950, means of production were distributed to each rural Chinese adult. At the same time, under the new marriage law, women found themselves able to gain freedom from unwanted marriages. This combined attack on the inequalities produced by TMP, PCMP, and gender practices was truly revolutionary. The Communist party was horrified at the upsurge in divorces initiated by women who, with land of their own, no longer needed the doubtful economic protection of husbands. Many women clearly believed that they could live better on their own; this view stands as extraordinarily strong evidence of the inequality of distribution within Chinese households, where surpluses over the barest subsistence generally went to males. As a number of scholars have shown (notably Stacey 1983), immediately after the Revolution the Communist party feared the loss of support by entrenched local men more than it dared to rely on the probable gain in support from economically emancipated women. Hoping to keep on track a program of land reform followed by collectivization that lasted through the 1950s, authorities abandoned women's interests, allowing household heads — mostly male — to maintain their customary control of means of production. Women and the young again became subaltern members of a *jia* made up of hierarchized persons with differential access to a cluster of economic rights and duties.

If the goal was socialism, this shift was a horrific mistake. Household heads who insisted on preserving gender and kinship hierarchies could hardly have been expected to eradicate the old tributary hegemony. Gender and kinship inequalities naturalize hierarchy more effectively than any other human institution. The household model of deeply unequal reciprocities accustomed the young to their places in a wider tributary economy and legitimated the inequalities of power to those who benefited from them. It would be wrong to say that the revolution was lost with the decision to support the patriarchal *jia*, for egalitarian treatment of women might not have been possible under the conditions of the time. But all the evidence shows that the party's universally male leadership believed that the revolution *for women* could be postponed (M. Wolf 1985); gender and kinship hierarchies were as necessary to the maintenance to political control

as they had always been. After land reform, as before it, women and younger men worked for the household head, with few economic options but to obey his commands. One scholar observes that "the popularity of genealogy-based territorial rights . . . remained undiminished" (Siu 1989:163).

Rural communes brought new opportunities for women and the young after 1957. The deemphasis on household property and new forms of work organization gave women and the young greater daily independence of their household head and quantified their contributions to the family pool. Nonfarm work in services and factories of all sizes encouraged even greater intrahousehold equality. At the same time, however, the communes, and some noncommune work, maintained the direct economic power of patriarchs by paying the household head directly for the work of all. The decrease in private sideline work by women, which had formerly passed money through their hands, left them without personal sources of income. Restrictions on residence enforced through the commodities-rationing system tied young people to their natal or marital households more firmly than Qing law and lineage elders ever did. With socialist restriction of private production, communal payments for collective work, and enforced residence in one's home village, a degree of household pooling which would have pleased the great Neo-Confucian Zhu Xi himself became the rural norm.

In many communities where lineages had been powerful before the revolution, the commune system revived lineage segments as production brigades and teams, further monopolizing power in the hands of clusters of male agnates (Diamond 1975). Commune welfare systems provided collectively only for those without kin, especially agnatic kin; brigades and teams as late as 1980 would garnish wages or farm income of sons, though rarely of daughters or sons-in-law, to support their parents (A. Wolf 1980, fieldnotes). During very bad times, however, even a married-in woman might be denied a share in local resources, driven out of her husband's village to beg, or even sold (E. Friedman et al. 1991:241), as agnates closed ranks against outsiders. In nonagricultural work units such as factories, universities, and service providers, jobs, housing, services, and commodity distributions were channeled through household heads to other members of (usually) his household. Married couples generally could not choose, for example, to live in housing provided by the woman's work unit rather than the man's, if the two were different; it was assumed that husbands, not wives, supplied their households with housing and services.

Over the decades, socialist politics repeatedly attacked private production and exploitation through wage labor. Exploitation within households, however, was rarely confronted. When it was, it took the form of encouraging women to join the work force. Participation in social labor gave, or would give, women equality with men. Yet women seemed to have been treated as ballast in macrostructural readjustments in many of the labor-policy changes that occurred after 1949

(Weinbaum 1976). Joining the work force failed to give young Chinese women equality anywhere where familial obligations remained strong (Salaff 1981, 1991; Kung 1983; Greenhalgh 1985a), and did not do so where their kin seniors were also their work supervisors.

China's birth-limitation programs, instituted in the 1960s for urban cadres, in the early 1970s for urban people in general, and in the late 1970s for the vast rural population, have sharpened Chinese officials' focus on kinship as an essential institution of social control. They also reveal the strength of the gender bias that shapes households to forms continuous with the past. Chinese people unquestionably continue to prefer boy children over girls, a preference often taken by non-Chinese as purely ideological. Although the desire to maintain a patriline simply for its own sake — to give one's ancestors descendants in return for the life they gave the present generation — is still strong for some Chinese, people, when asked, are usually much more pragmatic, more materialist, in their explanation of their preference for sons over daughters: where manual labor must be done, males are stronger. Awareness of and action based on this biological given (exaggerated by the better nutrition and care boys receive while growing) are understandable where unmechanized tasks predominate. Gender prejudice is common too in regions where other kinds of work are possible. Parents know that sons have better opportunities for higher education and well-paid, stable jobs than daughters have; since the reforms of the 1980s, this inequality has grown every year. In 1988, an experienced Women's Federation cadre told me:

Men are always expected to work, so they are found jobs, but the government policy on women working keeps changing. Right now, we are expected to try to persuade women that they can contribute as much to society by staying home and being good wives and mothers. This is because there is too much unemployment. Women are not wanted as much at factories as they used to be. They are laid off, or not hired in the first place, or are encouraged to retire and try to find other work, like private business. When a person retires from a state job that can be inherited, it is almost always given to the family's son, not the daughter. If there is only a daughter, sometimes the job-inheritance right is ignored, because the work unit does not want to employ women.

Sons are better than daughters as financial supports to their aging parents. Husbands and fathers, not wives and mothers, will be the principal breadwinners, and multigenerational families will tend to be patrilineal under such conditions. Now, as in the past, these conditions are set by the state.

Will the one-child policy automatically change this system? Probably not, for a de-facto one-child policy has been laid down for urban government workers — a large proportion of urban populations — for decades, with relatively little effect on a kinship pattern structured by hard economic realities. Discrimination

against women is not an accidental byproduct of patrilineal, patriarchal kin systems; it is their principal consequence and purpose. Without massive affirmative action for women, Chinese households will continue, quite rationally, to prefer sons. They will continue, quite predictably, to evade one-child restrictions and attempt to re-create patrilineal families because the contemporary state, like that of late-imperial China, channels access to the means of production, as well as to many other essential material goods, more to and through men than to and through women.

Unable to risk gender equality, unwilling to give up the household as a convenient administrative unit for the control of labor and means of production, Chinese officials encourage the reproduction of a tributary system at the grassroots. Lessons from kinship, now as in the past, are easily transferred to experience with the paternalistic state.

#### COLLECTIVE PRODUCTION: SOCIALIST OR TRIBUTARY?

China also retains strong tributary patterns because so much of the Chinese population depends directly on state economic circuits for its livelihood and life chances. As officials, low-ranking public servants, state production workers, and members of their families, hundreds of millions of Chinese are maintained from tax revenues and from the surpluses created by state enterprises. Employment by the state has been the desire of ambitious people since the revolution as much as before it. State employment has multiple advantages in material rewards, prestige, political connections, and opportunities for mobility. The rare exceptions — unusually successful private entrepreneurs — are the objects of very considerable resentment from state employees as a class, who still expect to outrank *all* commoners, on *all* scales of comparison. Those who work directly for the state hold ranks from party chairman to the near-slave convicted prisoner. The majority, clustered in the middle as local officials, railway workers, factory managers, doctors, and the like, derive considerable power from the fact that they eat the nation's rice rather than food from their own farms or workshops. They make their lives and livings in political-economic structures that overlap extensively with those of the parallel class in late-imperial China. Their descriptions of their circumstances often contain transparent references to tribute as a mode of exchange, as in Frank Pieke's telling example of a pheasant dinner with friends in Beijing. These birds were not for sale anywhere, but had been obtained from the host's work unit that in turn had received them as a "tribute payment" (*shang gong*) from a lower-ranking work unit (1992:255).

Since Lenin, state ownership and management of means of production have been hallmarks of actually existing socialism, as well as the goals of many classes and groups attempting to establish socialism elsewhere. State agriculture, indus-

try, and services, however, have been only intermittently capable of expanded reproduction in the socialist experiments of this century. At present writing, they have crumbled almost everywhere. This failure was certainly due in part, but probably not wholly, to the scale of defensive militarism forced on systems perceived as so threatening to world capitalist hegemony. The lack of congruence between expectation and outcome in such societies suggests that we rethink the nature of the state production that formerly appeared to be the key to a transition to socialism. The success of state planning and production in other east Asian societies, such as in Japan, and in Taiwan in the 1970s and 1980s, however, precludes any easy dismissal of state-managed production as inherently flawed.

In the 1950s and early 1960s, China was greatly influenced by the Soviet model, in industry especially. The resulting large, centralized, bureaucratic production units have been repeatedly attacked — by a genuine workers' rebellion during the early Cultural Revolution, by privatization and decentralization during the reformist 1980s — but have maintained their form, and their faults, to the present. That form and those faults represent more the persistent heritage of a preexisting tributary system of production than they represent socialism.

Such a conclusion is all the more distressing and puzzling when we consider the very substantial movement toward socialism that the 1949 revolution made possible. This record contrasts markedly with that of the GMD during the same period, in which a plainly tributary mode was forced on Taiwan's unwilling population. A necessary, though not sufficient, element of China's movement toward socialism was an economic expansion linked to increasingly egalitarian distribution of its fruits. A World Bank study made in 1979, at the end of thirty years of collectivism, shows that much of the egalitarianism that must accompany any real socialism was not illusory. Over these years, despite a 2 percent yearly average growth in population — comparable to that of other developing countries — and despite problems with agriculture,

rapid expansion of industrial output has caused national income per person to grow fairly fast. With adjustments for international comparability, per capita GNP appears to have grown at an annual rate of 2.0–2.5% in 1957–77 and (because of a spurt in the last two years) 2.5–3.0% in 1957–79. Even the former rate is significantly above the average for other low-income developing countries (1.5% in 1960–78) — though even the latter is well below the average for middle-income developing countries (3.7%), and has not been high enough to pull China out of the low-income group. (1981:10)

The report comments on China's very considerable internal equality, noting that

China's most remarkable achievements during the past three decades has been to make low-income groups far better off in terms of basic needs than their counterparts in most other poor countries. They all have work; their food

supply is guaranteed through a mixture of state rationing and collective self-insurance; most of their children are not only at school, but being comparatively well-taught; and the great majority have access to basic health care and family planning services. Life expectancy — whose dependence on many other economic and social variables makes it probably the best single indicator of the extent of real poverty in a country — is (at 64 years) outstandingly high for a country at China's per capita income level. (11)<sup>2</sup>

The World Bank's consultants attribute this increased life expectancy to the elimination of acute malnutrition by food rationing, to the primary education of women resulting in better health and childrearing, to near-universal basic health services reducing respiratory and diarrheal diseases, and to birth control, which results in better maternal and child health (99).

The World Bank sees the resources that made this improvement possible as derived principally from building industry and reinvesting its profits in yet more industry: a "distinctive feature of the Chinese budget is that enterprise profits are the largest single source of revenue," with high profit margins and almost all profits remitted to the state. The second largest source was the three-quarters of all tax receipts deriving from industrial and commercial transactions; the agricultural tax amounted to only 3 percent of total revenues. Half of the budget in the 1960s and 1970s was reinvested in economic development. Rich, industrialized provinces retained much smaller shares of reinvestment than poor backward ones, which also received subsidies (50–51). The major flaw in this development program seems to have been failure to build an adequate transportation network. China had less mileage in roads and railroads in 1979 than India, Brazil, or the USSR; the World Bank described its road system as "one of the least developed in the world" (132–33). The twenty-eight-fold increase in navigable waterways since 1952 (134) could not compensate for the constraints on land transport.

The basis for much of the overall economic improvement since 1949 was the socialist accomplishments of the 1950s. Much of the stagnation that has occurred since results from the failure of state-managed undertakings to continue to expand. The socialist alternatives offered to industry after 1949, too narrowly construed in practice, were engulfed by the existing and continuously reproduced tributary context of such work. As a member of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences observed, "After the founding of the PRC, China faced a serious outside menace from capitalist countries. This made some people think that anything different from capitalism was socialist; thus some feudalistic elements were mistaken to be socialist and promoted by leaders. They tried to fight capitalism with feudalistic weapons" (Liu Xingwu 1991:22). The result has been that, in the 1990s,

2. Compare with Indonesia at 47 and India at 51 years of life expectancy at birth in 1979 (World Bank 1981:98).

state and other large collective production stagnates. With little to contribute to those employed outside state units, the beneficiaries of state disbursements are seen as useless or even parasitic; with insufficient income of its own to back its power, the ruling class continues to rely on coercion, including outbursts of violence, to ensure the extraction of value from the people.

Andrew Walder has made an important contribution to the understanding of tributary forms of work through his innovative analysis of work and authority in Chinese state-managed industry. He looks past the Eurocentric and ill-fitting theory that is generally applied to this sector, concluding that something he calls communist neotraditionalism characterizes the complex of behaviors and beliefs exhibited by those who work in China's state factories.<sup>3</sup> He argues convincingly that communist neotraditionalism is not derived directly from the industrial predecessors of present forms, but he chooses the term "to highlight the contrast with more familiar modern forms of industrial authority that are notable for their relative impersonality and anonymity, the relative political and economic independence of workers from management, and the resulting prominence of group conflict, bargaining, contract, and the relatively tight bureaucratic restriction of the personal discretion of immediate superiors. Out of common convention, the term *tradition* communicates these social attributes more concisely than any other" (1986:10). By contrast, he defines communist neotraditionalism by several features: first, employment is not a market relationship, labor more resembles fixed than variable capital, and employment is a value in itself, with many social services delivered at the state workplace; second, the system creates considerable dependence of workers on the enterprise itself, on party and management, and, in a personal way, on supervisors (11–12). Neotraditionalism depends on force, control, and surveillance but also on positive incentives: "political loyalty is rewarded systematically with career opportunities, special distributions, and other favors" from officials. Loyalty combines with institutionalized networks of patron-client relations maintained by the party, and with "a rich subculture of instrumental-personal ties independent of the party's control" (6–7).

Walder's is an excellent framework for the understanding of Chinese state industry as I know it, but it works well for the other loci of state employment also

3. Walder has constructed his analysis to apply to a generic communist political system, an abstract from both China and the Soviet Union. Although I ignore this aspect in what follows, my explanation for the similarity of "communist neotraditionalism" in the Soviet Union is a dilute version of that applied to China. Russian czarist absolutism was built on a TMP that shared many features with the Chinese, and was carried into the organization of the postrevolution political economy in historically particular ways I cannot undertake to describe here. I should note, however, that the substantially greater success China has had in supplying its population appears to depend on the persistence of its PCMP, a political-economic feature that in prerevolution Russia was undeveloped.

— for research institutes, post offices, hospitals, government bureaus, and the military. More important for the argument of this book, Walder's communist neotraditionalism looks remarkably like late-imperial tributary style. Walder does not address these parallels, both because he is well aware that "a cultural tradition cannot explain its own continuity (or lack thereof)," but also because he focuses so sharply on theories of industrial development. Some patterns of industrial control which at first look traditional appeared in both the West and China only after World War II; Walder's Communist neotraditionalism is a modern form of industrial authority (10). In support of this position, he observes that the contracting system common in precommunist industry was common in many industrial traditions, including those in the capitalist West, and thus cannot explain novelty in communist systems. He also summarizes the abrupt and unprecedented transition from a prerevolution industrial system based largely on small handicraft shops to one in which large-scale and relatively modern industrial enterprises began to predominate (30–33).

Walder is perfectly correct, I believe, about the slight influence prerevolution large industry had on its socialist successors; much of it was capitalist in organization and style, with some petty-capitalist compromises. I would argue, however, that the state industries he so clear-sightedly examines drew their traditions of organized dependence and institutional culture not from previous capitalist industry but from the broader tradition of state employment — a key element in the tributary mode of production. In his analysis, Walder emphasizes a "principled particularism," which he describes as representing "a mixture of ideological commitments and impersonal loyalties demanded by the modern Leninist party and the role expectations of modern industrial organization with the personal loyalties characteristic of traditional authority and patrimonialism" (25). His concept of "principled particularism" also precisely epitomizes the Confucian ideal of combining loyalty to an impersonal and positively valued system of Confucian-imperial virtues, laws, and institutions with direct, immediate, personal loyalty to official patrons. Loyalty to the former should guide interaction with the latter, while service to the latter channeled advantages deriving from the former to the loyal subject and grateful client. In principled particularism, the party rewards and promotes people according to the *loyalty* and *service* they render (25). These are feudal words for feudal virtues.

Discussing the split that emerges between rank-and-file state industrial workers who are also party activists (and sometimes informers) and those who are not, he comments: "Although workers the world over show scorn for members who break rank in this fashion, nowhere else are such mutual antagonisms so permanently institutionalized in routine labor relations" (25). These words call up vivid images of the class-complicated anger of commoners at their fellow commoners who stood at the bottom of the state employment system in imperial China — the yamen-runners. Walder notes other stratifica-

tional consequences of tributary hierarchy: "China's industrial labor force, reflecting a pattern of stratification characteristic of society as a whole, is divided into several status groups, each of which has its own publicly defined rights to income, job tenure, social security, labor insurance, and housing and residence — each of which, in other words, is legally entitled to a distinctive style of life" (40).

#### HISTORICAL CONTINUITIES IN STATE EMPLOYMENT

The Chinese textile industry is a well-studied example of a technologically advanced light industry deriving directly from a much older production tradition; it reveals the transition from a late-imperial tributary industry to a contemporary "socialist" one. Although much textile production in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century China had important capitalist components, in this ancient art, tributary and petty-capitalist relations remained salient. Textile production made heavy demands on women's labor, which was made available cheaply by the operation of kinship and gender hierarchies, and on resources which were often controlled by the state. It is thus a particularly promising site at which to examine contemporary textile work for the influences that are likely to generate not socialist but feudal relations of production.

Beginning two thousand years ago, silk was produced for home use, taxes, and — by the Song — for sale in many parts of China, but was almost everywhere a luxury fabric. Commoners wore hemp, ramie, and, by the Yuan, cotton.

Of textiles made from other fibers, cotton was the most important to the state, which used it for military uniforms and equipment from as early as the mid-seventh century. It became a commonly grown fiber only during the Song, however. During the Yuan, it was procured through a tax in kind for military uniforms. Its production spread in all directions from a center in Jiangsu along with techniques of ginning, carding, and weaving brought by a woman from Hainan, Huan Daopo. People grew cotton to spin and weave for home use, for taxes, and for sale, and as a raw material to ship to areas that did not grow cotton (Chao 1977:7, 12–13, 19, 16, 28–29). By the early Qing, in some parts of the lower Yangzi Valley, 90 percent of the land was under cotton; in Shandong, it was twice as profitable as growing grain (Elvin 1973:213).

As cotton became both abundant and cheaper in the late Ming, it replaced most other fibers, including silk, for ordinary clothing. Whereas in earlier times government officials and employees had been paid partly in low-grade home-woven silks produced for this purpose (L. Li 1981:42), such disbursements came generally to be in cottons (Chao 1977:19). Both silk and cotton production were encouraged by the state at various times, and state silk-making establishments sometimes bought their raw materials on the market.

During the early Ming, silk production was expanded from only three government centers to twenty-nine sites in nine provinces (Santangelo 1984:15), which spread the best silk-production techniques widely. Increases in quotas resulted in the flight of artisans and their skills to smaller towns. Privately produced silk was apparently cheaper than that made by state factories; their managers thus turned to purchasing finished fabrics from the market to fulfill their quotas. In the resulting corruption and disruption of morale, the state system lost its capacity to lead production. Though refurbished under new rules and regulations during the early Qing, government silk production was in serious decline by the nineteenth century (L. Li 1981:44, 38; Santangelo 1984). Throughout the Qing, however, the government remained the largest single consumer of silk. Lillian Li observes that

the manufacture of silk for commercial purposes greatly expanded in the late Ming and Ch'ing . . . [but] the government played a significant role in this process. Perhaps one might say that the expansion of government demand and the growth of the commercial market were interdependent. The expansion of the commercial sector had been to a large extent sparked by government demand, but at the same time the government was increasingly dependent on the commercial sector for fulfilling its needs. These needs were, however, declining over time, and were largely expressed indirectly through commissioned work rather than directly through government production. (1981:45–46)

The Ming expansion of textile production was only a part of a much wider commoditization that has been the subject of much analysis. The scholarship on this subject can be reduced to a pair of questions: what got it started, and why did it stop short of capitalism? Li suggests that the interaction of state and commerce (tributary and petty-capitalist production are more precise) "sparked" by strong state demand was essential to the Ming expansionary dynamic. I would agree, stressing that state *production*, rather than procurement on the market, was a key to expanded reproduction under these conditions.<sup>4</sup> Yet private production of both silk and cotton remained small in scale, thus lessening the pressure for improvements in technology.

Why did the Ming/Qing expansion stop, while production remained the same at the household level? The household basis of textile production units before production in the capitalist mode in the early twentieth century continues to puzzle analysts of this question. As we ponder the answer, it is well to remember

4. We need not conclude that state procurement from the market operated according to market principles; Chinese government interventions in the market were often aimed at limiting the effects of market mechanisms, as, for example, in the repeated efforts over the centuries to stabilize grain prices through "ever-normal granaries."

that petty-capitalist textile production in both silk and cotton were remarkably efficient even in the face of this fully developed capitalist competition. Simple, small-scale silk production in the Pearl River delta "not only met the competition presented by the mechanized filatures but flourished" (Sankar 1978:70). In his sharp-eyed China tour in 1907, Lord Ronaldshay followed the movement of hand-woven cloth, some of it still made of home-spun yarn, from the central Yangzi to Sichuan and beyond, regretfully noting its competitiveness with Manchester goods (1908:72-75, 115). When I queried women in Sichuan, where hand spinning and weaving persisted into the 1950s, I heard paeans to the hard-wearing, comfortable qualities of the old fabrics and their virtual costlessness for families with daughters.

Silk and cotton present slightly different pictures of petty-capitalist production. Silk may have been produced in waged workshops perhaps since the Song, and unambiguously in such settings since the Yuan (Chao 1977:29). A law limiting private silk producers to twenty looms was repealed in the late seventeenth century, leaving the upper limit at one hundred looms (L. Li 1981:53). Thereafter "many silk-weaving factories expanded to five or six hundred looms," according to Chao (1977:30). Lillian M. Li produces considerable evidence arguing that throughout the Ming and Qing, and even in the twentieth century, individual weaving households generally had only four or five looms, however. Her much lower figures might be nearer Chao's if we ignored the issue of whether the looms were under one roof. She describes twentieth-century handicraft putting-out systems in Nanjing as having "relatively large-scale operations" of one hundred to three hundred looms each (1981:53). This figure accords well with a number of characteristically petty-capitalist patterns, including especially the avoidance of official attention.

Chao's insistence that cotton weaving was never done on a large scale until the 1880s (1977:30-31; also L. Li 1981:60) should also be considered in this context. Putting-out systems larger than the household were designed to be low-profile and likely to be omitted from the written record. Chao attributes the persistence of household-based cotton textile production to a number of factors ("[1] the nature of the goods involved, [2] the rural institutions in that period, and [3] certain cultural elements in the Chinese traditional society." The most important of these "cultural elements" was a domestic production system by family workers who shared its returns in egalitarian fashion (1977:32, 35).

The strong family loyalty and the deep-rooted desire among the Chinese to preserve families as the basic social units and to keep the family members together whenever possible compelled them to choose a type of production organization that would be identical to the family units. Meanwhile, the family as an entity felt an obligation to take care of its members, which made them more dependent on family support than they would be otherwise. In a sense,

in the Chinese family labor was a truly fixed productive factor even in the long run. This helps explain why the Chinese domestic production system had a tendency to harbor surplus labor. Instead of discharging redundant labor, the family kept it in production even when the marginal earning fell below the subsistence cost. (39)

Esther Goody, accepting Chao's argument that cotton production was household-based only, attributes that scaling to Chayanovian "self-exploitation" of women within households (1982:31-34). But Goody accepts as well the widely held assumption that "the family members must be supported somehow, and must eat," no matter how much or how little they worked (19). As earlier chapters in this book make clear, such an interpretation of the Chinese family omits entirely both the stress on unequal treatment of family members and the power kin seniors had over their juniors. "Redundant" females, especially little girls, easily found a ready market for their extremely cheap labor in other households in many parts of China. The history of textile production can hardly be written without a clear view of the commoditization of Chinese women as it interacted with tributary pressures to maintain certain family reciprocities.

State production, especially of silk, was advantaged by the power of officials to demand quotas of raw materials or finished goods at below-market prices (e.g. L. Li 1981:42) and by its positioning — repeatedly stressed by Li — for developing and spreading improved techniques. State production had a profound, and possibly mutually influencing relationship with that of petty-capitalist handicraft; Lillian Li states that "it is possible to see the strong resemblances between late Ch'ing and twentieth-century private practices and those of the Imperial Factories of the late Ming period" and that "public and private sectors were intertwined, and their institutional features were remarkably similar" (1981:52, 58).

Li argues that these features made small-scale production highly resistant to capitalist penetration. That resistance was "economic and institutional" (36), taking the form of domestic production linked by numerous petty-capitalist institutions, including vigorous local markets. She comments on the strength and durability of the indigenous organization of silk production in those areas where it had long been in place (129). Differentiating this older system from capitalist production was a marked aversion to risk: "the wealthy preferred to invest their money in real estate [such as silk filatures for rent] or in short-term, high-yield investments, such as pawnshops, [rather] than in development of long-term, high-risk modern enterprise" (187). A multiplication of purely commercial brokers and agents between the household producer of raw materials and the ultimate purchaser evolved, Li argues, to spread the risk:

*Pao* — "to contract," or "to guarantee certain achievement" — was a fundamental concept which pervaded . . . economic relationships in China. In a

complex process, such as the silk weaving industry, the networks of *pao* could be quite lengthy. Financial management and production remained separate. The ultimate purpose was the diffusion of risk and responsibility among several different people, rather than their concentration in the hands of one entrepreneur. In short, it was totally contrary to the so-called spirit of capitalism. (61)

Spreading the risk was indeed a key organizing principle of Chinese production. Why this predominating concern with risk? Was the Chinese fear of risk so great that it can be suggested as a cause for the inhibition of capitalism proper, even in the presence of that mode, as Lillian Li argues here, and K. T. Li argued in the previous chapter? Because producers faced not only the marked uncertainties of what was, at base, an agricultural commodities market but also the irregular and intentionally suppressive interventions of an economically active ruling class, Chinese concern for risk is understandable. Both petty-capitalist and tributary systems operated to push the risks and costs of production as far "down" as possible — to the tax-paying household. Households, in their turn, pushed those risks and costs onto the shoulders of their weakest members, whose subordination the ruling class ultimately guaranteed.

Late-imperial state textile production can only artificially, and with difficulty, be disentangled from petty-capitalist patterns. The reestablishment of state textile production after 1949 was, of necessity, based in part on the ongoing remnants of the earlier system as well as on new socialist ideals. Silk production in the city of Shengze, Jiangsu, has a degree of continuity with the past which makes it an exceptionally clear example of how older relations of production have been reproduced.

#### STATE SILK PRODUCTION IN SHENGZE

According to a recent study of Shengze by Ju Futian and Wu Dasheng (1986), state weavers fleeing increased quotas in the early 1400s brought elaborate looms and the techniques for making high-quality silks to the Suzhou countryside. Among the towns that took full advantage of this shift to greater private production was Shengze, which soon became one of China's four best-known silk centers, along with Suzhou, Hangzhou, and Huzhou. Small-scale household production soon generated petty-capitalist workshops: by the late Ming, several thousand weavers were employed, some by owners of dozens of looms. In mid-Qing, migrants from Shaoxing brought new techniques, especially in dyeing and printing, and Shengze became an important silk-collection and distribution center, a hub of silk commerce, and a source of weaving machinery and equipment. Shengze firms had branches in many cities throughout China, exporting silk through its port (290–98).

Production by Chinese capitalists using electric-powered looms partially transformed relations of production; in 1935, Shengze had 1,360 electric looms employing 908 workers. Japanese organization of the silk trade in 1937, however, drew the best-quality raw silk out of China, closing down these modernized factories. Handicraft production of silk fabrics continued (Ju and Wu 1986:300), probably producing some of the many varieties of cheaper silks for which the region was well known. In 1924, Shengze artisans made more varieties of silk than did those of Hangzhou, including silk-cotton mixtures and specialty fabrics such as *suling*, used for dressing the dead (Ball 1982:582–83).

After Japan's defeat, the GMD resurrected Shengze's mills to produce cotton fabrics. The 1949 revolution revived some silk production. By the end of the 1950s' movement toward the socialization of industry, four factories, producing mostly rayon and some silk blends, had set the pattern for local textile production, which then persisted until 1975. Only after 1975 was outdated machinery replaced with equipment good enough to produce international-quality silks. Automatic looms and many other improvements were made in 1978, resulting in a production boom during the 1980s (Ju and Wu 1986:300–303).

The boom depended, Ju and Wu claim, not only on improved equipment bought with state funds but on labor skills:

Most of the families in town have silk weavers among their members. Many families have been in the trade for generations and are well known for their silk weaving skills. Out of a sample from 8,490 households, 94.7 percent had people working in silk industry, among which . . . 31 percent are entirely engaged in it. . . . 37.69 percent have worked in the industry for one generation, . . . 56.71 percent for two generations and . . . 5.6 percent for three generations. Many weavers come from well-known silk making families, having acquired the traditional weaving skills from their parents in their youth. . . . The majority of the 1,000-odd young women workers who entered the town's silk factories in the last two years are from traditional silk making families. On the average, they mastered the technique and started to work independently within three months, which is estimated to be four or five times faster than people from ordinary backgrounds. (1986:304–5)

Two hundred and twenty-three smaller township and production-brigade factories were also active during the 1980s, almost certainly springing from earlier labor-employing household workshops, but assisted as well by Shengze's five county-level factories. The county-level units (plus an associated printing and dyeing factory) paid 58.4 million *yuan* to the state in profit and taxes between 1979 and 1982, eighteen times their state investments and loans for that period. From 1978 to 1982, they employed 3,200 new and 1,709 temporary workers, mostly young people. Of Shengze's 1982 work force of 17,906, 15,432 were industrial workers. Silk workers in the twelve county and town silk factories numbered

12,602, or just over 80 percent of the industrial workforce. Shengze clearly once again became a silk town (306-8).

Ju and Wu are silent on the subject of raw-material procurement.<sup>5</sup> This is a troubling gap in our knowledge, for the key to good-quality machine-reelable silk is well-grown cocoons. As all specialists insist, these are managed best through careful tending of relatively small numbers of worms, which are fussy about their environment and extremely susceptible to disease. Gearing up Jiangsu to produce cocoons for the expansion of the late 1970s was probably accomplished by means similar to those employed in Sichuan: household contracts with state monopsony of cocoons at state prices. The intensive and demanding labor of silkworm growing falls, almost necessarily, on farm women who take orders from their household heads.

An industry originally based on state demand for raw materials from household producers generated an enduring pattern of production which survived severe reversals in big-scale production. The inflow of traditional skills and expectations continues to mold the way Shengze works; Ju and Wu worry that fewer than one percent of silk-factory employees have the formal technical training to keep production techniques advancing (1986:311). Stability of practice has kept silk-working alive in this region but may not enable the expanded reproduction that Shengze's factories must achieve if they are to compete in world markets. What happens to a countryside-full of commodity producers of cocoons depends not only on the vagaries of a remote capitalist market for silk underwear but on the narrow gate of official decision making. Should those decisions become too detached from the experiences of farm women, all levels of this broad-based structure will be catastrophically vulnerable.

It seems reasonable to assume that productive socialized factories in Shengze, as in the rest of China, offer attractive work alternatives to the region's rural people. Despite continuing restrictions on geographical mobility, non-registered residents increased by nearly 300 percent between 1978 and 1982, according to Ju and Wu (1986:309). Yet they foresee a worsening labor shortage: "Female job-awaiting youths in other towns and cities are reluctant to leave their homes to become silk workers in Shengze," perhaps in part because "silk factories operate on a three-shift system, and the work is not nearly as light as it appears to be." (Tours of silk factories in Chengdu and Hangzhou have convinced this researcher too that the work is far from undemanding.) "To make up for this shortage, quite a few young female peasants have been recruited in recent years. However, they often move away, some going back to their home villages" (312).

5. The entire volume by Fei Xiao Tung and others (1986) ignores the raw-materials problem in the heart of China's silk region. One is strongly tempted to assume that the procurement process might not appear in a positive light.

We see something of why they have done so in Ju and Wu's descriptions of Shengze's unsavory living conditions. Narrow streets and crushing foot traffic lead to unpleasant and dangerous commuting. The town's sewers, built in the Ming dynasty, regularly back up all over town. The housing shortage leaves at least 710 households with no houses, and 230 with "housing difficulties." The houseless and those with housing difficulties amount, then, to nearly one-sixth of the town's residents. With a population of over thirty thousand, Shengze has one "very small and poorly equipped hospital" — and no clinics even at big factories. Women's and children's health care suffers especially. By 1983, the year of the study, only 109 commercial establishments were permitted, a limitation leading to difficulties in purchasing everything from amusements to staple vegetables. "The town's residents are frequently heard to complain about this" (312-14).

While Ju and Wu offer no information on the subject, I assume, from my field interviews in Chengdu, Sichuan, and Xiamen, Fujian, that leaving a job in one of Shengze's silk factories would be no simple matter. State employment is not easily laid aside, even for workers who are able to find other means of support. Permission to quit is not always granted, although those who have been refused permission make, by their own accounts, extraordinarily bad workers.

In Chengdu in 1988, a state worker who wished to quit an industrial job filed an application, which might take a year to process, to *tuiji*, or "withdraw," from state employment. Withdrawing is different from retirement (*tuixiu*), which carries postemployment benefits, such as a pension, supplied by the factory. A worker who has been permitted to *tuiji* ceases to work but remains an unpaid member of her work unit for about two years, during which time she may change her mind and return to state employment. In the expansionary climate of Chengdu during the 1980s, this waiting period made people anxious lest the factory's needs alter and their permissions be rescinded. My interview subjects were small petty capitalists sinking their profits into business expansion, and thus eager for independence from their former jobs. In Shengze, with its apparent restriction on petty capitalism, we see a more classic choice: work for the state or go back to the farm.

One could hardly ask for a clearer example of a "socialism" that appears to have re-created some aspects of a tributary system. Chinese officials are once again supervising the production of silks for a remote purchaser, calling on home-taught skills and home-bred docility in local labor power, drawing value away from its region of production, and keeping a special class of state employees bound to unrewarding jobs. The absence, even in big factories, of medical care, housing, and other services that socialist production by definition provides, results in worker flight and, almost certainly, to bad work in the factories themselves.

China has a long tradition of hereditary production workers who made goods directly for court or government use (see Hucker 1961:31-33). Their con-

tribution to the economy as a whole cannot have been large or important except in one way: among the goods they made were China's finest products, the things China was most likely to export in trade and to present as counter gifts for tribute brought from abroad. That there should have been significant technical and organizational continuities in such products is unsurprising. That expectations deriving from tributary-state production should have carried over into the organization of socialist factories was more than likely. For silks, for many other textiles, for lacquerware, for porcelain, for metalwork associated with arms production, for salt making and horse raising and a multitude of other imperial products, models existed in which whole regions of the country were geared to supplying state demands for materials and labor. Social scientists should hasten to explore the continuities that may exist with present regional cultures.

#### NONPRODUCTION STATE EMPLOYMENT

Although in past and present Chinas, some people worked directly for the state in production, the extraction of tribute from the population as a whole depended on an entirely different set of state employees. These were the officials themselves and the underlings who make officials efficacious. The late-imperial government has been admired for conducting its business with a relatively modest number of officials — only one local magistrate per 100,000 people in 1749, up to 250,000 in 1819 (Hsiao Kung-chuang 1960:5). Subordinates were another matter: they swarmed, with doubtless dozens for each official in a strict sense. In Qing-dynasty Hankou, two submagistrates (*xunjian*) had yamen staffs of armed guards and over a hundred civil functionaries, for example, while there may have been thousands of subbureaucratic functionaries — yamen-runners" et al. — in Hankou government offices (Rowe 1984:33, 36). In 1612, Fujian's Xinghua prefecture had eight civilian and nine military officials (plus four county civilian officials) — but 565 low-ranking employees such as policemen and horsemen (Vermeer et al. 1990b:156). The pattern persists — in 1979, the number of state workers and staff not including industrial workers accounted for 17 percent of the labor force, although they had been only one percent in 1952 (World Bank 1983:395).

The imperial network of inns for official travelers described in Chapter 2 has been replicated and expanded by the present government. Its operation offers many insights into the advantages of state employment. During fieldwork in Sichuan and Fujian provinces in the late 1980s and early 1990s, I have stayed in many county- and township-level government guesthouses. Drivers' road atlases indicate them all, for in many parts of the country they are the only form of public accommodation. They exist for the convenience of those who travel on official business; Chinese government could hardly continue without them. They have a

centripetal energy, absorbing more and more residents, including substantial colonies of staff and their families, and attracting clusters of service providers for those who visit these latter-day yamens. Often grandly overbuilt, they contain facilities their users could not afford on private means. They are used as recreational perks by anyone who can scrape acquaintance with officialdom. Food is often excellent and abundant (as well as extremely cheap) in the dining rooms of such hostels. To live in one for a week or two reveals that the number of meals served greatly outnumbers the number of staff and registered guests: the extra eaters are relatives and cronies. The guesthouse for Nanjing County, Fujian, has six hundred beds, only fifty to sixty of which are ever in use, according to the cleaners. In such places, a visiting foreigner may well find herself displacing from one of the better rooms a middle-aged cadre on holiday with a young woman who is clearly not his daughter.

Such centers of local government, including schools, party work units, and other public-service organizations (postal, transportation, sanitation, engineering, etc.), employ huge numbers of people. For an American accustomed to the cash nexus in which we live our lives, they are a daily education in the quality and nature of tributary life. A worker is housed, furnished, fed, transported, supplied with work materials, and given treats (theater tickets, a share in the work unit's windfall truckload of apples), according to status in the hierarchy. One is also paid, though not much. Money is part of the distribution of useful items supplied by the work unit — but the money, however carefully managed, cannot be freely used to alter the housing, food, and so on. which are one's lot. Wages go for clothing, some foods eaten at home, savings, and a wide range of miscellaneous expenses. To choose to spend money on a benefit that is normally supplied — such as housing — is nearly impossible. This is not only because living space is hard (not impossible) to build, buy, or rent. To move out of legitimately apportioned work-unit housing, however, is a bit like moving out of the parental home. There is a room, one is supposed to live in it, it costs money to do otherwise. If you move out, what are you up to? The housing allotment is part of your earnings. Are you going to throw that away? Why separate yourself from your economic, political, and social base? Don't you like your fellow workers? Are you hiding something? The combination of unnecessary wastefulness and deliberately sought isolation would draw invidious attention. Take the housing appropriate to your status: money matters less than position.

In state employment, one accepts what is given and makes one's attachment to the unit conspicuous. People with nothing to do there report to their units every workday, whiling away the hours in sleep, newspaper reading, gossip, or silent tea drinking. Perhaps there is no electricity, so they are unable to run their machines. Or the raw materials have not arrived, or there are already warehouses full of whatever product the factory manufactures, or they are massively overstaffed, or the task for which the unit was originally organized has been rendered obsolete. Perhaps a po-

litical campaign, here or elsewhere, means that work is disrupted. Except under extreme conditions, go to work anyway, drink tea, and try to find out what is going on.

People who hold such positions must appear regularly at their units, but they need not do much else. They are attendants on their superiors, waiting to respond to direct orders from above, rather than self-motivated pursuers of clearly defined goals. The incredible lethargy of "workers" in Chinese state work units (department stores, post offices, government bureaus, and state factories) is difficult to exaggerate and extremely annoying to foreigners and Chinese alike. The near-failure of state production enterprises is, quite rightly, often attributed to the appalling irresponsibility and unresponsiveness of their employees, and these facts are used to deny that socialism can possibly work.

Why are Chinese state workers so lazy when, working in household businesses, Chinese will labor unremittingly? The obvious answer is that in a large, complex organization where they are guaranteed wages, whether they work or not makes no difference to the rewards they receive; working for themselves, they keep all they earn. Household labor is less alienated than that performed in huge corporations. There is a great deal of truth in this answer. It is certainly the answer generally given by Chinese people themselves. But there is more to the problem. The student of Chinese languages learns quickly that Chinese do not, as English speakers do, terminologically merge administrative activity in the office, study, cleaning the house, and laying brick under a single verb translatable as "work." Various forms of manual work are *gong*, as in *kugong*, heavy labor such as cart pulling. The university teacher, administrator, clerical worker, or post-office employee *shangban* — "ascends [to the place of] management"; the bookworker *du shu* — "memorizes books" or *yanjiu* — "researches." Children, engaged in the drudgery of memorizing thousands of characters, come closer to sounding like workers — they *zuo gongke* — "do work lessons," though this appears to be a locution that emerged with public education. It is graceless to ask an office worker or teacher where she "performs labor"; one asks in what unit the person "serves" (*fuwu*) — or, simply, to what work unit she is attached. In Chinese language, as in Chinese life, types of employment are necessarily separated between into the manual, *gong*, categories and the mental, office-ascending, book-studying sorts. These latter jobs were done almost exclusively in late-imperial China and in economically undeveloped Taiwan — and are done in the present-day People's Republic of China — by those who are either employed by the state or in training to be so.

These are more than verbal niceties; the lack of appropriate language in English goes to the heart of the absence in Western life of comparable relations except in military life. Those who serve the state hold positions that many others envy, for obvious reasons. People save, study, and struggle to pass the narrow gates of admittance to such service. There have always been Chinese who, recognizing the risks of office, have declined them, but to do so was never easy. Chinese (and Taiwanese) are sometimes extremely anxious when they sense an impending

job transfer they will be unable to refuse. Tributary servants "tremble and obey"; there are no alternative employers for state functionaries, and their loyalty is more fundamental than their ability.

Through the 1980s, as private production became more common, millions of Chinese sought employment outside the state sector. In my experience, people generally made this leap only when their state job became extremely ill rewarded and/or likely to be terminated. Good jobs in the state sector are still prizes, ideal combinations of high security and low work demand. Many Euro-Americans feel distaste, even outrage, at the work habits of east Asian petty capitalists, who are willing to live behind their businesses, stay open sixteen hours a day, and have their children look after customers in between math problems. We would not work in this way; a proper job would not make such inhuman demands. Government workers in the People's Republic of China (and in Taiwan), often hold similar sentiments toward fast-paced workplaces. One serves in government *rather* than work hard all day. The state is not a producer but an extractor from producers, and a distributor to its loyal servants. As long as the reality resembles this simple model, sentiment and work-related expectations will do likewise.

Extracting value from producers is the shining goal of a newly appointed rural official in a satiric short story by Freeman J. Wong. The cadre has drunk so much at his own promotion party that he speaks his mind, describing a relationship with the people he now governs: "I'm very happy today. This is the first time I really realize the importance of you, the common people. You are all my property. You belong to me. Without you, my power is not real power and I myself am not like myself" (1990:12). Chinese commoners use this terminology as well: they "belong to" particular administrative levels and thus to the men who head them. The quality and quantity of their roads, their schools, their industrial products, their foodstuffs are determined, in large part, by their community's situation in the hierarchy, and by the nature of the men to whom they "belong." The fictional cadre is happy in this moment of becoming an official, whose power depends on his control over others. Like officials I have encountered, however, he may find that maintaining control of other human beings is more difficult than it appears. He will remember, too, on the morning after, that he also "belongs" to someone. When I translated the old saw "I am His Majesty's dog at Kew; pray tell me, sir, whose dog are you?" for a funny and sensible county head, he saw the point at once.

#### CLASS POLITICS IN THE 1980S

The class politics of the 1980s were acted out in Tiananmen during the spring of 1989, when multitudes of intellectuals, some workers, and a good proportion of the Beijing citizenry first demonstrated for freedom and democracy and were then violently repressed by the military arm of officialdom.<sup>6</sup>

China's leaders turned to these control measures principally, I believe, to maintain the political-economic domination over petty capitalism which has been a major preoccupation of Chinese ruling classes since the Song. The inherent tendency of capitalist-like relations of production to generate "social disorder" or "freedom" (depending on where you stand) is well known to Chinese statecraft. Late-imperial rulers and some post 1949 leaders have emphasized the negative, social disorder aspect — *luan*, chaos — rather than the positive "freedom" aspect stressed by liberal traditions. But the phenomenon is the same. Through the screen of Western journalism, people outside China saw the 1989 spring protests throughout China as motivated primarily by liberal values deriving from Euro-American experiences with capitalism and resistance to it. In part, assuredly, the protests were "liberal." This does not mean, however, that the protesters themselves were demanding freedom for petty capitalists as a class of actually existing people; petty capitalism commoditizes and delegitimizes the "legitimate" personalism of the tributary system. Protesters spoke against corruption, called for the restoration or creation of a clear distinction between state/public resources and household/private resources. They objected to the gobbling up by well-placed leaders' households of the best bits of the collective economy, demanding the rectification or elimination of transfers between the socialist mode — which thus loses its socialist character — and the petty-capitalist mode — in which the familism of even large enterprises links officials' children and street hawkers in a common universe of (im)morality and (mal)practice. Capitalism proper, as practiced in China by international corporate capitalists, was not a serious issue, either pro or con. Feudalism was.

For the students who initiated the protests, and for the Beijing people who overwhelmingly depended on the state payroll, much of the energy for collective action came from their anxiety about their own economic futures. How would a student from Beijing University, China's finest, have a job of the sort she thought she deserved if the leadership kept giving all the best companies to their "sons and younger brothers," as well as to their sisters and their cousins and their aunts? The "freedom" to criticize leaders was woven into the need to preserve a socialist mode from corrupt transfers at the top. Student and other participants acted heroically, but we should be clear about their goals and the political economic conditions that inspired them to risk their lives.

What brought out the rest of the millions who demonstrated in those weeks? In Beijing, students were supported first by other government workers — those from communications agencies, medical people, teachers, police, state factory hands, and by those whom inept socialism has failed: the unemployed. Many of these, hustling scanty and sometimes illegal livelihoods, were the "hooligans" who took most of the punishment for protest. Such people marched in such

6. Some of this material is included in Gates 1991b.

cities as Chengdu as well, filling its broad main avenues with what must have been hundreds of thousands of people.

An enormous proportion of people work for the state in such capitals as Beijing, Chengdu, and Xian, where major demonstrations paralleled those of Beijing. Inevitably, protest aimed at economic and political justice for this class will involve such people. In the highly commercialized city of Xiamen,<sup>7</sup> by contrast, the students marched, but they marched alone. Fuzhou, the provincial capital of Fujian, has many state workers. Their wider interests, however, lie with the commerce that dominates the provincial economy. Student protests there peaked on 16 May, receiving virtually no support outside the narrow circle of intellectuals (Erbaugh and Kraus 1989:5, 13). Business people in Chengdu whom I interviewed in the fall of 1989 saw the whole event as quite irrelevant to their class interests.

In Beijing, eleven members of the "Flying Tiger Brigade," a group of motorcyclists composed mainly of private businessmen who had served as couriers for the student protesters, were arrested as a subversive "motorcycle gang" on 30 May (Amnesty International 1989:86). It has been suggested that the economic crackdown of fall 1989 "was designed primarily to punish the owners of restaurants and other small private enterprises in the capital that had offered material assistance to demonstrators" (Yale-in-China Association 1989:6). But this assistance seems unusual rather than characteristic of petty-capitalist response. Beijingers from many class positions helped the Tiananmen protesters with food, water, shelter, and in other ways as the protest in that city engulfed nearly the entire population by late May. Some of them at least did so very much as *Beijingers*, according to one foreigner with extensive Beijing contacts.<sup>8</sup> Observers' lists of participating class-identifiable groups often show broad class support, even including members of the military and security organs, but never include "shopkeepers" or "petty traders" or any such designation (e.g., Delfs 1989; do Rosario 1989). A rare reference to the participation of peddlers simply points out the poverty of some student protesters, keeping themselves in school at Fudan University in Shanghai by selling used books, old clothing, and cheap jewelry on campus (S. R. Chen 1989:8).

Petty-capitalist participation in the uprising appears to have been insignificant in Chengdu, where I was best able to take the pulse of popular response. Petty-capitalist households kept their heads low, partly because they were not effectively organized, but primarily because the attacks on corruption smelled faintly like an attack on them. At the same time, the "People's Market" that was burned was a state

7. I conducted interviews on another topic in Xiamen for three weeks in November-December 1989 and was thus able to explore some of the effects of the May-June events on local people.

8. John S. Rohsenow, in Beijing during the protests, emphasizes the sense of outrage that Beijing's sophisticated *laobaixing* felt that outsiders — such as the army — should attempt to play a role in their city (personal communication, 31 July 1989).

department store; the many private shops nearby were left untouched. The few petty capitalists who would discuss the class aspect with me resented most the tax and other transfers made from their private pockets to — or at least in the name of — the public purse. Students and state workers, by contrast, criticized state functionaries mostly for transferring public resources illicitly to private hands. They saw a great many private entrepreneurs, large and small, as the beneficiaries of such transfers. "Honest" business people were acceptable by society, but those receiving illegitimate assistance from the state sector should take warning.

In the dramatic but characteristic events of Tiananmen, we see a Chinese popular politics in which petty capitalists played the extremely marginal role they still have in political life. Capitalism is a side issue. The debates are about the state mode: socialist or feudal?

#### TAIWAN VERSUS THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Taiwan, by any standards, has a more successful economy than has China. Part of this success is due to the heritage of construction and legality left by the Japanese in Taiwan, and of destruction and social chaos left in China by the U.S.-aided GMD on the mainland. In any comparison between the two Chinese systems, it is only fair to recognize that by 1945 Taiwan, with all its war damage, was far in advance of continental China as a whole. Their trajectories since 1949 have amplified Taiwan's advantage. The popular and often the academic conclusions drawn from this fact are that capitalism has made Taiwan wealthy, while socialism has impoverished China. Many assume that the two economies operate very differently, on entirely separate principles.

As this and the previous chapters perhaps have made clear, I disagree. Both Chinese ruling classes operate large state-production sectors that give them substantial economic autonomy from their tax base, especially from their agricultural tax base. The quality of rural life does not, therefore, have much direct effect on the operation of government. Taiwan's government, after its initial and, I think, highly self-interested land reform, has done little to improve life for rural Taiwanese; the government of the People's Republic of China has done a great deal, relative to resources, when it did not have to. But at the end of the day, agriculture and the rural folk who practice it are not central to either system, despite pieties about the peasant as foundation of the nation.

In any industrializing region that hopes to remain free of the domination of multinational capital, state production must take an active role. In China, these industries have been saddled from their inception by feudal holdovers; the same was true in Taiwan until the mid 1960s. Thereafter in Taiwan they have had the advantages and disadvantages of uneasy alliance with world capitalism, a risky undertaking that China began only in the 1980s. In Taiwan, the insertion of a substantial role for foreign private capitalism has not resulted in dependency or

in an extraordinary degree of exploitation of local workers — although many work too much for too little in bad conditions. The real dependency of unequal exchange has been averted; Taiwan runs a positive trade balance with the United States. It has been averted because Taiwan's rulers, with their class industrial fiefs up and running, remain independent of both capitalists and their own people. It has been averted too because capitalists must compete in Taiwan with shoals of fast-moving, opportunistic, hard-working petty capitalists who absorb profits that in Colombia or Bangladesh would go to the multinationals.

In China, rulers have been slow to risk loosening capitalists and petty capitalists to compete, even while setting the terms of their encounters. Does their reluctance stem from their commitment to socialism, or does it signify the choice of a Confucian grandfather who prefers his money safe behind a loose brick in the wall? Do Chinese rulers think (as I do) that their hold on local activities is so weak that petty capitalism would overwhelm them if the door were opened a crack? It certainly felt weak in the reform decade of the 1980s, when tributary anxieties reached the boiling point at Tiananmen. The reassertion of central controls which has emerged in the mid 1990s suggests a defensive return to tributary policies.

The political economies of Taiwan and China do not differ greatly in their economic logics. Those logics grow out of encounters between tributary and petty-capitalist choices, each of which implies the possibilities of the other and thus reproduces not only itself, but the idea of its opposite, whenever someone acts. Westerners are apt to see capitalism as either the Good or Bad Fairy of the piece — but always coherent and tremendously powerful. From the Chinese perspective, capitalism is a set of random opportunities to be seized by tributary or petty-capitalist players for their own ends. The Chinese may be wrong about this; the capitalist mode of production *may* be an epochal juggernaut that mows down feudal and petty-bourgeois alternatives. But it has not done so in the east Asian world yet.

# 12

## Conclusions

When I was young my nursemaid spoke. . . :

The nursemaids over there have it very easy  
after a big feast, there are never any messy dishes to clean up  
At daybreak, they need but lightly wave a piece  
Of magic black-colored cloth  
And everything will return to its original place

Nursemaid! May I go see if this is true?

— Chang Shiang-hua, "The Drunkard," 1986

The Chinese social formation, "Chinese culture" in the broadest reading of that term, takes its primary structure and dynamics from the interplay of the tributary and petty-capitalist modes of production, as outlined in these pages. I have offered interpretations of late-imperial political economy, regionalization, kinship and gender, and folk ideologies as well as brief analyses of the ways in which this past informs present Chinese societies.

The relationship between China's two modes of production shows important continuity of structure maintained through historical-materialist process. Sometimes as members of fairly self-conscious classes, and sometimes simply as persons choosing among household alternatives, people acted in accordance with two different and cohesive sets of material and ideological possibilities. Sometimes TMP-compatible behavior has nearly swamped behavior of the PCMP, and vice versa. In this book, I do not attempt to explain *why* these shifts occurred, although that may be the most important question that can be asked of Chinese history. Almost certainly there is no single answer; we must examine the historical particulars without abandoning the search for structural regularities. Shifts in relative weighting of petty-capitalist versus tributary choices are partially explained, however, by the lack of fit between the two modes, by the contradictory impulses to action engendered by people who had come to see two distinct vi-

sions of the good life. Here, I content myself with outlining *what* I think was going on and, to a lesser extent, *how* it occurred.

Essential to the argument is the idea of competition between the two modes of production — a competition not of reified abstractions that, of course, cannot act, but of competition between officials and owner-operators, women and men; within minds, among actions. Since the Song, this competition — this struggle — has motivated a great deal of Chinese culture, giving it the shape in which it encountered the capitalist mode of production. This struggle is culturally recognized, I think, by the Chinese preoccupation with the suppression of unorthodox thought, political dissent, and family dissension. In the settlement of conflict, harmony, that great cultural shibboleth, is rarely achieved — repression or self-sacrifice are more familiar outcomes. This vision of unresolvable struggle is reconstructed at each generation not because Chinese behavior is an acting out of ideas in conflict, but because people are constantly obliged to distribute limited resources to often incompatible but legitimate ends: tribute versus investment, honorific maintenance of the old or the dead versus the nurture of the young, dowry versus brideprice, and so forth.

The secular trend of Chinese life since the early Song has seen both modes grow in sophistication and complexity, developing ever-more-elaborate institutional mechanisms for their mutual encounters, expanding the range of skills a Chinese person needs to survive. We may see this in certain aspects of the Chinese state and of Chinese business practice, and in the highly mystified institutions that link the two modes into a single social formation, and hence are quintessentially Chinese. Kinship and gender are key among them, as is folk religion.

Especially since the Song, rulers developed a wide repertory of ideology and action to maintain a tributary economy and to limit competing petty-capitalist thought and deed. That repertory included: the magnificent stroke of coopting moneyed talent through the examination system, using what are fundamentally market mechanisms; a wide range of effective administrative and military techniques; detection of dissent by secret police and informers; the penetration of domestic life through making agnates partners in indissoluble patricorporations and making men responsible for female kin; and the appropriation and recontextualizing of folk deities and celebrations. Contemporary historical opinion does not judge the Chinese state as much by its late-Qing collapse as by its overall tendency from the Song on to gain strength and sophistication. The capacity of an imperial court and a class of scholar-officials to discipline and extract revenue from their huge territories, to move toward longer periods of dynastic stability, to penetrate popular life with the vision of tributary personal relationships and with the imagery of a hierarchical, bureaucratic cosmos: these stand as compelling evidence for the strength of the tributary mode. The persistence into late-twentieth-century industrial times of Chinese states in which tributary circuits

still dominate and regulate those of commerce in the interests of bureaucratic ruling classes is evidence of a more immediate kind.

Petty capitalism too developed its repertory, showing increasing sophistication and power over time. We see a long shift toward capitalist-like relations of production combined with the familistic ones its encompassment within the TMP required. Men made use of the inescapable patrilineal core of official kinship to forge lineage organizations that functioned as accumulating and investing corporations. At the same time, people following petty-capitalist logic ignored or reinterpreted kin obligations in social matters in which tributary interests were weak, such as the treatment of female kin. The array of business practices developed by petty capitalists is second to none in achieving the goal of expansion of wealth combined with protection against a predatory ruling class.

The issue of the secular trend in the struggle between these emerging forces can be focused most clearly by a consideration of who held hegemony. The historical trend seems relatively clear. The Song was an era in which powerful families with commercial interests allied themselves with a strong military to build a government that encouraged social mobility and fostered private production and free labor. These tendencies were not seriously curbed by the Mongol invasion; the Yuan, it seems, did not fully absorb the complexity of the TMP or object to the counterhegemonic commercialism that flourished during their relatively brief rule. But forces were building to reassert the TMP pattern in which wealth would flow to rulers rather than to their subjects. The Ming reorganization of taxation, their refinement of the bureaucracy, and their increased attention to achieving ideological hegemony led directly to the Qing state. According to Susan Naquin and Evelyn Rawski, "The long-term trend in Chinese history toward centralization of state power was continued and advanced under strong interventionist early Qing rulers" (1987:10).

Much action by the ruling class, often most marked at the beginning of dynasties, was aimed at regaining control over the economy and at channeling resources into military, hydraulic, administrative, and ideological mechanisms to ensure their success in doing so. Such action had two consequences: initially, less wealth remained in private hands to evolve into capital. This was, I think, both a desired and an intended consequence. Chinese rulers, even those favorable to commerce, did not want the country run by rich merchants, whose power would have unseated them and been ideologically outrageous to boot. But the second consequence, as Naquin and Rawski have wisely noted, is that ruling-class construction in favor of creating productive agriculture and smooth mechanisms for extracting tribute from it also favored the development of commodity production (1987:21-27). This is true both because merchants also needed roads and canals *and* — perhaps more important — because strong demands for tribute, and the power to enforce those demands, triggered intensification of production,

population growth, seasonal labor surpluses, income-earning sideline production, and folk ideologies that glorified privatization as popular resistance.

A successful reestablishment of a powerful TMP may lead to more economic success than the TMP is quite prepared to cope with. Powerful tributary extraction constantly reproduces the social conditions under which people will produce for market out of desperation; commoners invent material and ideological means to resist the flow of all surplus to their rulers. Clever petty capitalists find ways to keep and expand wealth, and occasional episodes of tributary weakness lead to new power centers. Serious problems for petty-capitalist production emerge because of the economic irrationality of the market in its uses of collective resources (water, soils, forest reserves, etc.). Many people become discouraged by the overextension of the political-economic free-for-all that petty capitalism engenders. A political clique with a new control gimmick (including the persuasive use of ideology), or with a military base outside of China proper, may thus find it possible to rearticulate the organizational mechanisms and moral core of tributary society in such a way as to find willing listeners. A refurbished TMP once again begins to build the infrastructure for more prosperity than it will know what to do with. When prosperous times come, the petty-capitalist moral imperative not merely to maintain but to aggrandize the household will also find willing listeners.

The organizational structures of each mode have grown stronger with each turn of the screw. Petty-capitalist action not only forces stronger control mechanisms from the TMP for maintenance, it forces accommodation within the tributary state to market mechanisms: competition in the recruitment of scholar-officials, the ever-increasing use of money rather than labor and simple commodities as payment of taxes, shifts away from hereditary work in state production centers, the use of state-licensed merchants for the production and distribution of such profitable commodities as salt. Petty capitalists shelter under the tributary umbrella of kinship and evade official control with the border-jumping mechanisms used by capitalist multinational corporations. The most successful merchants move part of their operations out of the country entirely, as the Fujianese did, avoiding taxes and government interference generally. Failing that, they use the advantages of long-distance trade and other forms of sojourning in places remote from their home base. And, like the ordinary, local petty-capitalist farmer or textile maker, they make the family their fortress.

Petty capitalism was an expanding irritant to, a cause of focused response in, the ruling class: it was the motor of China's modern history. But I do not think it can be argued that petty capitalism has ever gained hegemony in China. Its actions are evasive; it is pinned securely to a model of kinship compatible with tributary goals. Perhaps most important, it has developed only the sketchiest vision of a political alternative. The secular trend of late-imperial China has been one of struggle extraordinarily productive for its powerful rulers and horrendously

wasteful for its common people. Its persistence since the 1949 revolution still shapes choices today in China and Taiwan. While carefully controlled alliance with world capitalism has made petty capitalism the key to development in Taiwan, China shows greater continuities with its past. Now as then, the byproducts of the struggle between its modes of production have been technological stasis, population growth, and dramatically involuted social relations. This is a very long way from what Marx appears, on the surface, to have meant by the Asiatic mode of production. But perhaps it is not such a long way after all.

Does my specialized use of the term "petty capitalism" further our understanding of Chinese societies? When we take a mode of production to be a system of economic and social reproduction which shapes both material and cultural life, I think it does. A "petty-capitalist mode of production" recognizes and organizes an essential aspect of Chinese political economy and cultural experience and relates it to more obvious, more ideologically emphatic, aspects of Chineseness, summarized as a tributary mode. The concept of petty capitalism as a coherent and oppositional set of behaviors and mentalities clarifies many of the daily choices ordinary Chinese people make. Condensing and describing what is most important about Chinese culture is made simpler with such an analytical tool.

The concept helps too to advance our theoretical understanding of society in general. The debate about the nature of east Asian political economies focuses on two questions: Did these peoples develop a kind of capitalism? If so, what was and is its nature? It is reasonable to argue (as do most who engage in this argument) that big private industry in Taiwan, for example, is simply a capitalism with Chinese characteristics. It is also possible to argue, as I have here, that Taiwan's big, indigenous, private firms are a part of a private-producer mode which is still dominated by tributary hegemony. Their owner/managers are thus the upper petty-capitalist class in a class system in which petty capitalism defines only the nontributary side of the economy. I subsume these tycoons under the label "petty capitalist" not to dispute their size or significance but to avoid a conceptual error.

It is clear that Taiwan's (and Singapore's, and Hong Kong's, and Korea's, perhaps Japan's) and certainly some of China's large firms meet definitions of capitalism based on relations of production and ownership of the more obvious means of production. This "capitalism" converges with that of the West and is intimately engaged with the Western capitalist mode of production in its daily operations. It is also true that Western capitalism has passed through phases in which owner-managers developed large but still recognizably "family" firms, in which the claims of kinship placed some limitations on the movement of capital. Between east Asian and Western capitalisms there are large areas of overlap; for many analysts, those overlaps authenticate large, contemporary, private, Chinese enterprises as capitalist. From those who take this position, I ask a fuller explication of the role of the state as owner and employer, and of the kinship/gender and

class relations of that most characteristic petty-capitalist class, owner-operator household firms.

My guess is that the convergence some analysts see between Chinese and capitalist political economies is temporary. The large and important internal Chinese markets have significantly different political contexts in which state and kinship are especially salient. In consequence, they are likely to travel in the future, as they have in the past, different trajectories. This is not because "culture" in some idealist or elitist sense steers their motion with dead hands. It is rather because the inner motion of each differs. The "laws of motion" of the capitalist mode of production as they were specified by Marx assumed European-like state, kinship, and cultural environments. The economic aspects of those environments were left out of his equations. The motion of the PCMP depends on other environments, which east Asians continue to reproduce. In Chinese societies especially, large, powerful state sectors exist; the talented and the opportunist are drawn to find niches in them, and to perpetuate them; by doing so, human beings gain the power to continue to restrain and direct the motion of petty capitalists. They, in their turn, by being productive, evading taxes, staying small, fearing officials, and eschewing political action, perpetuate the gulf between themselves and power which helps reproduce both themselves and their tributary opposites.

My interpretation has the advantage of Occam's razor. Although it is sensitive to the particularities of both China's past and present, it is constructed of elements drawn from and compatible with twentieth-century historical materialism. It aims both at elucidating Chinese culture, thus making it more readily comparable with other cultures, and at expanding through concrete example the reach of the idea of a mode of production to encompass, as Marx and Engels clearly intended it should, relations of kinship, of gender, of popular ideology.

This book remains a sketch, suggesting a number of lines of inquiry which may link Chinese culture with others of the same kind and may define more clearly the outlines of capitalism proper. Although capitalism has not yet overrun all world cultures, it has had profound effects on ecology, population dynamics, economy, politics, gender and kinship, and the way people envision their world for an astonishing proportion of the globe's population. Experiments in socialism deriving from the former Soviet Union have failed to find the genuinely new forms that might have fended off capitalist pressures by creating egalitarian abundance. Since the astonishing political events of 1989, capitalism has had no real rival on this earth. For all that a century and a half of socialist thought has taught about the tremendous human costs of running the world on capitalist principles, we have as yet invented no way of escaping its limitations and creating a more humane political economy. It is immensely important that we continue to be conscious of the patterns and processes of capitalism lest we begin to take them for granted as natural, inevitable, and permanent. Marx's demystification of those patterns and processes remains Marxism's most valuable legacy.

Throughout the period of capitalist expansion, China has proved extremely resistant to takeover of its political economy by capitalist relations of production and the liberal politics that have historically accompanied them in the West. The east Asian polities of Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, and Hong Kong all have powerful state modes of production which have used considerable force to engineer capitalist cooperation with and subordination to their national goals. In all these, with few and relatively short-term exceptions, indigenous petty-capitalist firms (some admittedly large) have come to outcompete foreign corporate capitalists in production and in the extraction of surplus value from their own working classes. Capitalism proper simply does not play the same role in these societies as it does elsewhere; it has less power.

It may be argued that this is a phase in the development of worldwide capitalism, that east Asians will outgrow their state-heavy, petty-capitalist-supported economies and look more "normal" as capital's accumulative force gains strength. Until the 1970s, such an argument would have been as good a guess at the future as any, and better than most. Since the emergence of east Asian economies as the main moving force in the world economy, we must think again. East Asia is becoming Number One not because its social formations are becoming more capitalist but because the dynamic of a tributary mode that has captured a petty-capitalist one is geared up yet further by the capture of capitalism. East Asian leaders clearly intend that the state, with its essential tributary resource base, shall retain hegemony. The violent confrontation at Tiananmen in 1989 between students critical of illegitimate operation of the state mode and China's leaders benefiting from that operation is only the latest example of the privileged status of the hegemonic mode in east Asia.

Perhaps those east Asians whose interests are served by capitalism can overthrow their absolutist states and establish something more than the superficial democracy of Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, and South Korea. But to do so, they must confront not only the state apparatus but petty capitalists as a class. East Asian petty capitalists owe much of their existence to kinship forms that enable very considerable exploitation of juniors by seniors and females by males. In an energetic labor market, patriarchal power erodes easily unless backed by the state. In China's Song-and-later social contract, however, heads of legitimately constituted households accept limitations on accumulation in return for hegemonic help in keeping their domestic labor supply in line; scholar-officials allowed the masses to truck, barter, and exchange for profit, in return for popular absorption of patrilineal kinship and feudal philosophy. The alliance is very strong, as Chinese women found after the revolution and as Chinese young people find whenever they question the TMP hierarchy too publicly.

I predict that, in the foreseeable future, difficulties in establishing free-wheeling corporate capitalism in China will persist; Japan, as it consolidates a more complex position in the world economy, will not become more like the West ex-

cept in fashionable superficialities; east Asian states will always be on the verge of journalistically invented "breakthroughs to democracy" in their political form but will act with all necessary force to suppress real challenges to TMP centrality. Every once in a while, citizens will be run over by tanks to emphasize that point. Petty capitalists will muddle through, machining the bolts that go in the frame that fits on the car that drives to the house that Zhang built. If I am right, Marxist scholars will need to revise their interpretations of what capitalism has been and of what it is likely to become. This book has been an attempt to begin this task without abandoning a powerful tool that does not happen to be a crystal ball.

This interpretation of Chinese culture suggests other, more academic, problems and points toward their solution. As I hinted briefly in Chapter 2, the PCMP may be a lens through which to view three other of the enduring ancient class civilizations: those of the Indian subcontinent, of Islamic Afro-Asia, and of the non-Islamic Mediterranean. Prior to the expansion of capitalism as a world system, Sub-Saharan Africa, large parts of North and South America, and Oceania seem to have had the wisdom and good fortune to save themselves from commodity economies and extremes of inequality; the complex indigenous civilizations of Mexico and Peru have been too thoroughly disrupted by colonialism for one to analyze, though I judge that they too followed a different path and did not develop petty capitalism as I have defined it here.

In India, in the core Islamic world, and in the European Mediterranean, however, we find civilizations where market economies too constrained to be called capitalist coexisted with other modes of production. In them, money capital, consumer goods, and persons were commoditized, though the key factors of production, land and labor power, typically were not. In these worlds, we find traditions of strong states supported in gender and kinship relations, and in attitudes toward the market, by religious institutions. And we find (along with China) the world's extremes in the repression of women. Purdah and suttee, the veil, and virgin motherhood compare well with footbinding and Confucian death-before-dishonor values in their extraordinary violence against women.

This tripod — extreme sexism, strong states, and extensive but not hegemonic capitalist markets — supports behaviors often strikingly similar to those of Chinese petty capitalism. The pattern cohered, persisted, and gave rise to more distinctive present-day consequences in east Asia, I believe, because it was in China that rulers most carefully aligned their interests with those of commoner men by inventing the forms of Chinese kinship. They then persistently adhered to a simple, administratively useful set of definitions and laws in regard to people and their property with the results I have described for gender, class, and state. A connection between the bonds of biology and the most critical of all cultural relationships — the ownership of means of production — is a human commonplace, but in many societies people have some freedom to rewrite their kinship

rules. In China, the state enforced their patrilineal core. In consequence, China has persisted more autonomously into the twentieth century in culture, in polity, and in political economy than any of the ancient states. Such a view of several of the world's major civilizations makes possible consistent and still holistic comparisons among them for a variety of intellectual purposes.

Another direction from which to proceed in the implementation of the idea of a petty-capitalist mode of production is to apply it to the debates about petty commodity production past and present. As Ellen R. Judd so effectively outlines (1994:114-18), the term "petty commodity production" is generally used to distinguish production-for-exchange by household labor from petty capitalism, in which wage labor is employed. Because of the commoditization of women, this distinction is difficult to preserve in the Chinese case. There are three currents in the petty-production debate. One focuses on the proliferation of petty commodity production in many present-day societies, the other on the role of this pattern in the origin of capitalism, and a third on the connections between household production and relations of kinship and gender.

First, to what degree is petty commodity production a separate entity of some kind, and to what degree is it merely a disguised form of proletarianization? The Chinese case, I think it is now clear, suggests that east Asian and perhaps other forms of PCMP can be independent of capitalism (although necessarily dependent on *some* other mode of production). The patterns of petty production incapable of expanded reproduction so often described for the slums and markets of the capitalist-dominated third world bear only superficial resemblance to the Chinese PCMP and are probably best seen as proletarianization.

The second debate inquires whether petty commodity production is a necessary historical precursor to capitalism; whether it diverts economic actors away from "moving on" to capitalism; or whether the two are in fact independent, merely coincident. I would argue for the latter. Some private commodity production existed in almost all precapitalist class societies; if petty commodity production had tended to evolve into the capitalist mode regardless of context, surely it would have done so in China. But petty capitalism (capitalism too) exists only in historical context. What is distinctive about Europe is not petty production but the absence of states powerful enough to bind property-holding unbreakably to kin groups.

Third, those interested in petty commodity production increasingly explore the relations of production which are culturally presented as those of kinship. Much of the sinological literature takes kinship as a given and assumes egalitarian bonds of affect among kinfolk. This is clearly a weak assumption. While as humans we are doubtless biologically biased to form such bonds, the attachments between parents and children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, are often disrupted or overridden by cultural practice. Kinship is not a given, but must be constructed. The Chinese kinship system is better seen as an ideological

precipitate of the interaction of a limited set of biological givens, of state attempts at administrative efficiency, and of the open-ended possibilities of the commodity form. Markets sell the *idea* of commoditized social relations along with surplus eggs and handicrafts, and where women and children are weakly positioned (by the state) to defend themselves against such commoditization, intimate ties are easily manipulated. Only where the power of the state and its tributary system over private capital are weak — perhaps because they pay insufficient attention to the intimate life of the household — will kinship cease to be the primary nexus for commodity production.

In the study of petty production, the so-called domestic mode of production has received considerable attention. This tradition, which depends on the work of A. V. Chayanov, has been influential and useful. It has sharp limitations, however, in that it encourages analysts to examine domestic production without questioning the consequences for households of their encapsulation in tributary systems or of the sharp inequalities inherent in their kinship- and gender-based relations of production.

This book argues for careful examination of multiple modes of production in a given social formation. The progress made in anthropology since the 1950s is largely the result of our growing understanding of the significance for the peoples we have traditionally studied of an expansionary capitalism since the 1400s. Much work remains to be done on specifying and tracing out the dialectical influences of subordinate modes, of counterhegemonic economic logics, in virtually all of these societies — including those of advanced capitalism and of the mid-century socialisms. Eric Hobsbawm, speaking of Britain, which in this century has experimented with various combinations of state-managed and *laissez-faire* economies, reminds us that "the main socialist discovery of the postwar era has been precisely that the social management of the economy can take other forms than total centralized planning under total public ownership. The socialist problem lies in finding the right combination [of public and private forces] to get economic and technical dynamism while maintaining equality and social justice" (1989:13).

Most Chinese would agree. Born from the marriage between tributary and petty-capitalist modes of production, they are not likely soon to abandon their political-economic ancestors. Misled by deep and unexamined TMP assumptions, and thus deflected from the socialist road, the Chinese Communist party built institutions that emphasized some of the least productive and least progressive elements of popular culture, instead of the inhering productivity, democracy, flexibility, and taste for autonomy which imbue ordinary Chinese with their cultural character. Petty-capitalist politics is strong on resistance and weak on positive programs. How can this situation be strengthened? The only resources available, indigenously, in Chinese culture, are the organizational structures of petty-capitalist production. These include not only the household farm or fac-

tory but the community temple and the popular ideology and morality of money. Antibureaucratic populism, protofeminism, and market egalitarianism have much to offer Chinese men and women today.

The power of states to harm has been much underestimated by intellectuals in this century, a view that led to the appalling Leninist mistake that the state would be a people's best ally against capitalism. Tragically, we have wasted a century of socialist experiment on strengthening states instead of human-scale, popular, democratic entities, to control capitalism. We — all of us — have fruitlessly looked "over there" for magic solutions to our social messes. The Chinese PCMP does not generate all the organizations and ideology necessary to extricate the Chinese from their persisting problems. But it contains some of them and is, in any case, the cultural raw material from which their future must, inevitably, be forged. The effort to achieve social justice and a human social formation there will not succeed unless and until the Chinese take seriously their own popular traditions and the people who have struggled to create them.

## Appendix: Dowry to Wedding-Cost Ratios

J. Lossing Buck (1937) organized his data into categories based on the primary products, mostly foodgrains, characteristic of seven ecological areas. In my tables I have decomposed and reaggregated a part of his data, first choosing six substantial geographical areas in which I anticipated that the strong and weak influences of TMP and PCMP would be clearly visible, drawing boundaries around these areas on Buck's Map 3 ("Localities in which studies of all kinds were made" [1937:3]) and including all cases within the boundaries in my calculations.<sup>1</sup> Buck gives no wedding and dowry data for some of the sites; the actual number of cases on which calculations are based is given as N in my Table A1. The number of Fujian cases is unfortunately small; those for Guangdong do not in fact represent the Pearl River delta well.

Buck divided the farms in each area by size into eight categories. In my tables I have reduced the number of categories to four, by collapsing his "very small" and "small" as S, "medium" as M, "medium large" as ML, and "large", "very large", "very, very large," and "very, very, very large" as L; except in the North China Plain and Yangzi Valley, where a much higher proportion of the largest sizes of farm are found, "large" is given as L, and the various "very's" collapsed into a single VL category.

Buck's Table 17, "Special expenditures for farms having the expenditure" (412-16), contains current Chinese-*yuan* figure entries for five kinds of ceremonial expenditures, including "weddings" and "dowries." "Weddings" refers to the cost of marrying a son; "dowries" to the cost of supplying the daughter with dowry. "Wedding" costs include a variety of expenditures. This money might have been spent solely on ceremonies (feasts for the groom's relatives, for example); on ceremonies plus indirect dowry and/or brideprice kept by the bride's

1. I label the areas: North China Plain (NCP; actually the eastern end of the plain): Buck's site numbers 70, 71, 79-91, 95, 96, 98, 100, 101, 104, 106, 107, 108-11, 113, 114, 116, 117, 119; Yangzi Valley (YV; the lower valley, especially south of the river): Buck's site numbers 120, 122, 126, 131-37, 151-53, 158-62, 164, 166, 167-69, 171-76, 178-95, 219, 220, 224, 225, 226; Fujian (F; coastal and trading Fujian): Buck's site numbers 197-99, 259-61; Sichuan (SC; the Chengdu Plain): Buck's site numbers 230, 234-38, 240-55; Guangdong (GD; the Pearl River delta): Buck's site numbers 268, 269, 275-77, 282, 283; north-west China (NWC; Gansu and the nearby Qinghai trade corridor): Buck's site numbers 1-6, 16-19.

parents; or on purchase alone. Because of this merging, it is not possible to determine the relative proportions of dowry-heavy versus brideprice-heavy marriages in any category as for the Wolf data. The bottom line here must remain a simple ratio of wedding costs to dowry costs.

Buck's wedding and dowry figures are puzzling in a way that suggests that they substantially overrepresent the amount of dowry paid in Chinese marriage exchanges. As my Table 1 above (Chapter 7) based on Wolf's figures shows, marriages transacted with no expense to the bride's family were fairly common; many girls received little or no dowry from their parents (though they may have receive indirect dowry from their parents-in-law). Buck's "dowries" column contains no zeroes, only a blank indicating that the household had no such expenditure. Do these blanks represent households that did not pay for a dowry because they married no daughters, or because they gave the daughters they married no dowries? We cannot tell. We can only be certain — from other sources — that some girls went to marriage with no dowry from their parents. The figures offered in Table A1, then, overstate the amount of dowry that brides, on the average, received.

Marriages transacted with no expense to the groom's family were relatively rare. Buck's column for "wedding" expenses has fewer ambiguous blanks; the average costs of weddings must have been slightly less than my calculations indicate, but not as much less as those for dowries. With this warning, then, let us turn to Table A1, for which I recalculated summaries of three areas that should most clearly reveal the differential influences of weak and strong versions of the two modes.

Although there are many reasons to view these findings cautiously, the data are reassuringly predictable in the changing quantities of wedding and dowry expenses in regions and over differently sized farms, and in the resulting averages of dowry-to-wedding ratios. These last were high — 1.13 — in the North China Plain, middling — .74 — in the Yangzi Valley, and low — .53 — among the Fujianese.

It is not surprising that ritual costs regularly rose with the prosperity implied by larger farm size; it is surprising that they rose as little as they did in many cases. Only on the North China Plain did dowries almost quadruple from smallest farms to largest; wedding costs were generally more restrained in their variation.

Nor is it surprising that data for the North China Plain and Fujian represent two ends of a spectrum of magnitudes of expenditures, with the Yangzi Valley neatly in the middle. A north-to-south continuum in all kinds of phenomena is a cliché of Chinese studies. This gradient represents both different regional costs and regional differences in spending patterns: the poor north and the richer south, as well as the subsistence economy of the north and the more commoditized south. It is useful, then, to turn to some other regions in which north-

TABLE A1. Dowry: wedding expenses by political-economic region (North China Plain—NCP; Yangzi Valley—YV; Fujian—F) and size of farm

Site/Size	Weddings			Dowries			D:W
	Total Expense	Number of Weddings	Average Expense	Total Expense	Number of Weddings	Average Expense	
NCP/S	¥1258	22	¥57	¥1222	24	¥51	.89
NCP/M	¥1776	21	¥85	¥1461	21	¥70	.95
NCP/ML	¥1632	19	¥86	¥1724	18	¥96	1.12
NCP/L	¥3737	21	¥89	¥2212	22	¥101	1.35
NCP/VL	¥2911	21	¥139	¥3713	20	¥186	1.34
						Average = 1.13	
YV/S	¥4345	29	¥150	¥2001	19	¥105	.70
YV/M	¥4496	25	¥180	¥2672	23	¥116	.64
YV/ML	¥4464	25	¥179	¥3164	21	¥151	.84
YV/L	¥4509	24	¥188	¥2658	22	¥121	.64
YV/VL	¥4646	14	¥332	¥2468	10	¥247	.74
						Average = .71	
F/S	¥976	2	¥488	¥640	2	¥320	.66
F/M	¥1937	4	¥484	¥472	3	¥157	.32
F/ML	¥2315	5	¥463	¥711	3	¥237	.51
F/L	¥2299	6	¥383	¥1203	5	¥241	.63
						Average = .53	

Source: Buck 1937.

southness — interpreted as climate/ecology, as mixes of migrants and indigenes or, with Jack Goody, as exposure to Confucian letters (1990:109–10) — can hardly be argued to have had much relevance.

Let us look first at a region in which TMP was high and PCMP low, but which is not generally typed as northern — Sichuan. (See Table A2.) Migration into Sichuan following a series of seventeenth-century disasters was largely from neighboring south-central provinces, but Sichuan's dowry/wedding-cost pattern is closest to that of the North China Plain. An average D:W ratio of 1.55 was the highest of the six regions, higher even than for the North China Plain; again, as in Wolf's and my findings, the Sichuanese were dowry extremists.

A second region, the Gansu/Qinghai trade-route corridor, is located in the north. Its D:W ratio, however, resembles not that of the North China Plain but rather Fujian's (see Table A3). No imaginable migratory or diffusionary link explains this similarity. This region, like Fujian, was the entrepôt for a wide-rang-

TABLE A 2. D:W expenses in the Sichuan Plain (SC), by size of farm

	Total Expense	Number of Weddings	Average Expense	Total Expense	Number of Weddings	Average Expense	D:W
SC/S	¥173	4	43	¥126	2	42	.98
SC/M	¥214	4	53	¥402	5	81	1.55
SC/ML	¥276	5	55	¥442	4	111	2.01
SC/L	¥954	10	95	¥1435	9	159	1.67
Average = 1.55							

Source: Buck 1937.

ing trade dependent on a vast hinterland over which the state exercised ineffective control. Commercial transactions may be expected to have dominated those of tribute; petty-capitalist views may well have affected marriage exchanges, resulting in a low dowry average.

A third case in the extreme south, the Pearl River delta, should be tested for D:W ratios in a regional culture that many (e.g. Freedman, Naquin and Rawski and Skinner) lump with Fujian as southeast coast. My logic, by contrast, argues that it should resemble the Yangzi Valley, with its balance of TMP and PCMP forces. Guangzhou's overseas trade, unlike that of Fujian and the Gansu/Qinghai corridor, was brought under fairly strict control by the institutions developed to control commerce with Europeans, and Guangzhou was for centuries a key southern city with canal links to the capital. Buck's data are unusually inadequate for the testing of this possibility: only one site (Chungshan) for which figures are provided is located within the Pearl River delta proper. Calculating on the basis of a

TABLE A 3. D:W expenses in the Gansu/Qinghai corridor (NW), by size of farm

	Total Expense	Number of Weddings	Average Expense	Total Expense	Number of Weddings	Average Expense	D:W
NW/S	¥411	6	¥69	¥183	6	¥31	.45
NW/M	¥344	5	¥69	¥155	5	¥31	.45
NW/ML	¥391	5	¥78	¥114	4	¥29	.37
NW/L	¥742	9	¥82	¥357	6	¥60	.73
Average = .50							

Source: Buck 1937.

TABLE A 4. D:W expenses in Guangdong (GD), by size of farm

	Total Expense	Number of Weddings	Average Expense	Total Expense	Number of Weddings	Average Expense	D:W
GD/S	¥1757	7	¥251	¥827	6	¥138	.55
GD/M	¥1478	7	¥211	¥757	7	¥108	.51
GD/ML	¥1759	7	¥251	¥482	4	¥121	.48
GD/L	¥3330	11	¥303	¥1180	6	¥197	.65
Average = .55							

Source: Buck 1937.

much larger region, in which tributary effects would not be much felt, produces the following rather uninteresting result. With more complete information, I would expect an average D:W ratio for Guangzhou of approximately .65. Alas, on the basis of these data, Guangdong resembles Fujian after all. (See Table A4.)

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