

## *Model Villages and Village Realities*

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This article is a partial exploration of the relevance and usefulness of “models” for rural development in China. Dating back to the days of the Border Regions and guerrilla bases of the 1930s, the Chinese Communist Party has publicized the advanced (*xianjin*) and the model (*mofan*) units, rewarding them symbolically and materially, and holding them up for study and emulation. Sometimes these designations are awarded to individuals, sometimes to entire work units, that is, factories and industrial enterprises, agricultural teams (*shengchandu*), brigades (*da dui*), or entire communes. There have been widespread long-term national campaigns centered on models: for example, the Lei Feng campaigns that have surfaced periodically over the past three decades, glorifying an ordinary soldier who embodies the virtues of hard work, thrift, consideration for others, dedication to the Party and the Motherland, and self-sacrifice. Or there was the two-decade-long campaign to “learn from Dazhai,” singling out a poor mountain village that reportedly followed the path of self-reliance. Using collective effort and sacrifice to transform the natural environment, laboriously building terraces and irriga-

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tion works, the village raised itself from poverty to self-sufficiency, and then to surplus production and national acclaim.

Dazhai has been discredited in recent years and has faded from the national scene. There have been other national-level models with much shorter lives in the limelight, work units that rose to national prominence in connection with some particular campaign (the formation of the cooperatives, the organization of the communes, raising the level of grain production) and then receded from public view. In addition to the well-known national models, there are thousands more, publicized within their province, prefecture, or county, which may earn them an article in the *Renmin ribao* and repeated mention in the provincial press. They are publicized as study examples for their local areas. On a more modest scale than Dazhai, they are also places of pilgrimage for the leadership of the brigades, communes, and counties in their area. A leading provincial model may attract as many as 50,000 visitors a year who come for briefings, a guided tour, and discussion. Provincial newspapers, such as the *Dazhong ribao* in Shandong, give space daily to description and discussion of developments and events in advanced units, pointing out their recent achievements and attributing them to the correct application of the current policy line.

The focus of this article is not, however, a survey and typology of models. Rather, it looks, within a relatively small geographical area, at one ordinary village called Taitou, and at the advanced and model neighboring brigades that Taitou was urged to study and emulate during the decade of the 1970s. The article is based on field research conducted in 1979-1980.<sup>1</sup>

Taitou Brigade is located in southeastern Shandong, directly west of Qingdao. It belongs to the recently created Huangdao Special District, which since 1977 has been administered by Qingdao Municipality. Prior to that time, the area was a part of Jiaonan County and was administered from Weifang. The district is the site of a new oilport and industrial town that began construction in 1973. Most of the district area is divided between three peoples' communes, or a total of 117 brigades. Most of the brigades are composed of a single natural village. All but 28 are

grain brigades, meaning that their efforts are concentrated on production of wheat, corn, and sweet potatoes. The others are engaged in fishing and fisheries production, coupled with a small amount of grain agriculture. A few grain brigades have been permitted to put part of their land into vegetable production for sale to the growing town at Huangdao, or to grow small amounts of peanuts, cotton, or soybeans. The primary emphasis at the time of the research was on grain production, for local needs, and for increasing grain sales to the state.

Taitou is a grain brigade, and grows little else. Year-end accounts for 1979 show that 48% of collective gross income came from grain. Another 7% came from other agricultural production, specifically peanuts, apples, and peaches. The gross income from collective animal husbandry was a little over 4%. The rest of the collective income was attributed to "industrial sidelines." If this meant brigade or team-owned workshops and processing industries, we would be talking about an advanced unit. But, in this case, the 38% from sidelines represents the income earned by peasant contract workers on loan to the Huangdao oilport to do construction of roads and causeways, to transport building materials from local quarries, to build housing and workshops, and in a few cases, to work on short-term contract in Huangdao enterprises.<sup>2</sup>

The addition of contract labor to the brigade economy had brought the distributed collective income up well above the provincial average or national average by the mid-1970s. Terming Taitou an "average" brigade means only that it falls in the middle range within its local area. In 1970, Taitou's per capita distribution was 62 yuan. By 1974, with the start of oilport construction work, it had risen to 129 yuan, and by 1979 had reached 176 yuan, all without any further improvements or additions to the collective economy. Indeed, without the option of contract labor and transport work, the 1979 per capita distribution from collective sources might have been around 91 yuan, close to the national and provincial averages at that time.<sup>3</sup> Those units that were above the average were generally those assigned to grow some commercial crops, or that had been able to build up sideline enterprises,

or that were close enough to an urban center to benefit from the demand for peasant contract workers.

As Huangdao has grown, it has begun to develop its own construction crews and its own transport units. These are expected to take over much, if not all, of the work done by peasant workers. The 25,000 persons assigned to live in Huangdao are all holders of urban residence permits, former residents of other urban locales who have been transferred to job assignments in Huangdao. The town will eventually hold 45,000 persons. They, like the current residents, will have been brought from cities and towns in other parts of the province. There are plans to build an industrial complex with a variety of factories, some of which will be transferred from Qingdao along with their current workforce. The new industrial zone will relieve congestion in Qingdao, and it will absorb some of the urban unemployed youth. It is not meant to provide long-term jobs for the rural underemployed. Thus, once basic construction of housing and factory buildings is completed in Huangdao, the need for peasant contract workers is expected to decline sharply. The prosperity that Taitou enjoyed in the late 1970s cannot be maintained unless there are changes in the internal economy of the brigade. As a brigade without any significant sidelines of its own, it faces a sharp drop in collective income.

This discussion predates the changes in agricultural policy that began to be discussed and implemented in the fall of 1980, particularly the new alternatives of household and individual contracts for production of basic agricultural crops, specialty crops, and sideline enterprises. At the time of the research, and for most of the two previous decades, such options did not exist. Household ("private") sidelines were limited, and discussion of development of the rural sector and enrichment of the peasantry was within the context of a collective system of production. With an eye to what was then seen as the predictable future, the various levels of leadership within the province had singled out a small number of villages as models for the majority to consider. These successful collectives were the recommended alternative to reliance on contract labor.

The commune of which Taitou is a part, Xingan Peoples' Commune, had no units that reached true model status, but it counted about 30 of its 68 brigades as being more advanced. The criterion seemed to be degree of diversification. In terms of actual per capita income, the differences between advanced, average, and backward units within the commune were relatively small—about 15 yuan between each of the three levels.

One of Taitou's close neighbors was classed as an advanced unit. Though still primarily a grain brigade, it had a more diversified economy. Unlike Taitou, where wheat, corn, and sweet potatoes monopolized virtually all of the arable land, neighboring Gangtouzangjia Brigade was permitted to restrict grain production to 68% of its farmlands. "Permit" is a deliberate choice of words here: At the time of the research and for at least the previous 15 years, the decisions on the size of crop area assigned to grain or to other crops were made by cadres at the commune level in response to higher level requirements for grain sales to the state and estimates of the needs for local consumption. Brigades had virtually no control over these decisions.

One reason for permission to follow a more flexible cropping policy is that Gangtouzangjia has a denser population than Taitou. Its per capita farmlands are .2 mu less, a difference that qualifies it as a "land-short" brigade (*ren duo, di shao*).<sup>4</sup> Objectively speaking, all of the brigades in Huangdao are land short, compared to standards elsewhere. Taitou's per capita farmland is only 1.35 mu. However, in the 1970s, brigades that were recognized as land short were given more opportunity to diversify, in recognition of the fact that grains are low-priced commodities. Had Taitou's birth-control program been less effective, it too might have been able to qualify as land short, and move some of its grain lands into higher priced crops.

The other reason for permission to diversify is that Gangtouzangjia's grain productivity per mu is higher, thanks to a better water supply for irrigation. There is enough easily tapped water that almost every house has its own pump-well. Since 1976, its fields have been served by a system of electric pump-

wells. Even in years of poor rainfall, such as occurred in the late 1970s, the villagers are assured of stable, high-yield production and average 400 jin per mu in wheat production.<sup>5</sup>

In comparison, Taitou suffers from lack of water. It has two public wells of the traditional sort, a few private pump-wells, and a water storage tank into which water can be brought from a small river. The river previously flowed along the southern boundary of the residential area of the village. Because of periodic flooding here and elsewhere along the river route, the river was rechanneled as part of a massive public works project in the early days of the commune. It now flows in a new river bed, considerably wider than the old one, and about one-fifth of a mile further south of the village, forming a new border between Taitou's orchards and the grain field of the next village. Since Taitou's grain fields lie north of the residential area, they cannot as yet all be served by irrigation ditches, and some of the fields are watered by transporting water in buckets and irrigating the plants one by one.

Gangtouzangjia's water supply has a twofold effect. First, as suggested above, it makes for higher productivity in grain production. The village is not only self-sufficient in basic grains, it is able to produce a large surplus to sell to the state without needing to put all its land and labor into grain production. A village like Taitou, where wheat yields are 300 jin per mu or less, is instructed to keep its lands in grain or even to put more of its lands into grain in order to meet the rising standards for overall grain production set by villages served by irrigation. That, at least, was the policy in the 1970s.

The other effect is that as a land-short unit with a good water supply, Gangtouzangjia is allowed to put some of its collective land into vegetable production. By the late 1970s, it had put 150 of its 1670 mu into vegetable crops. It grew eggplants, stringbeans, tomatoes, cabbages, onions, cucumbers, white potatoes, garlic, assorted greens, and turnips. Some of this was distributed to the collective membership, and some was sold to the state as a high-value cash crop. In contrast, Taitou was allowed to put only 40 mu of its 1300 mu into vegetables and was limited to growing turnips for brigade distribution. In addition, Gangtouzangjia was allowed to assign 120 mu to soy bean production, while Taitou

was allowed only 40 mu. Further, Gangtouzangjia was permitted to put 160 mu of grain land into millet, kaoliang, and barley to vary the monotony of the diet and meet local demand. Taitou's allocation for such miscellaneous grains was only 35 mu, a restriction that led many of the villagers to grow them on their small private plots in place of vegetables.

The land-use patterns in Gangtouzangjia, both collective and private, provided more cash income and a more varied and balanced diet. This is not a new pattern. An examination of past cropping patterns in the area suggests that Gangtouzangjia, because of population pressure and relative success in wheat production, was allowed to retain or restore the pattern of diversified agriculture that had been the norm in pre-Liberation times. This pattern continued in Taitou, to some extent, until the late 1960s.<sup>6</sup> But under the increasing pressure of campaigns to "take grain as the key link" and increase sales to the state, Taitou and similar villages without adequate irrigation were forced to concentrate on fewer crops, particularly wheat and corn. More favorably situated villages were able to retain diversity and expand commercial cropping of vegetables, soy beans, and peanuts.

As the policy operated in the 1970s, agricultural success brought further rewards beyond immediate rise in income. In Gangtouzangjia and elsewhere, it opened the way to being given purchase priority and aid in obtaining more modern technology. In this instance, it helped to provide the brigade with its own generator, a harvester, a mechanical seeder, and additional tractors. Such purchases enabled the brigade to maintain high levels of agricultural production, and, at the same time, to release some of the workforce from basic agriculture. In 1975, Gangtouzangjia was assigned to set up a small factory, making parts for a state factory in nearby Wangtai. It was not until 1980 that Taitou's requests for permission to expand its collective economy into industrial sidelines were met: The brigade was assigned to set up a small printing press to print report forms and simple circulars for the various administrative levels in the district.

Gangtouzangjia's surplus labor force is also engaged in construction work and transport work for the oilport. This, together with indigenously owned sidelines and truck farming, accounts

for 65% of gross collective income. The difference in income between the villages is not startling, but it is significant. In the year-end accounts for 1978, the gross value of production per person was 188 yuan in Taitou and 257 yuan in Gangtouzangjia, reflected in distributed collective incomes of 132 yuan and close to 160 yuan respectively.

A more advanced and potentially richer unit is to be found in neighboring Xuejiadao Commune's Guanting Brigade. This unit has been cited as a model for the Huangdao District, and in 1979/1980 was approaching becoming a provincial model. It is a smaller unit, only 112 households, and in the pre-Liberation past had been a tenant village. What this means is that some 55% of the households had rented their land from absentee landlord families, and another 25% of households had worked as hired laborers. Most models cited in the Shandong press tend to have developed out of exceedingly poor beginnings. Guanting falls within this pattern in which model villages of today are the ones to which no one wished to send brides in the past. They have a pre-Liberation history of greater poverty and sharper class struggle than other villages; they then forge ahead and outstrip their more advantaged neighbors. Taitou would be regarded as among the advantaged. At the time of Liberation, there was one landlord family with small holdings, a handful of rich peasants with holdings of around 7 mu per capita, and most of the population were middle peasants, with a smaller percentage in the poor peasant/hired laborer category.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, to equalize land holdings, some of the more affluent middle-peasant families were forced to give up land.

Guanting has been commended as an advanced unit since 1970, and it was specifically cited as a "Dazhai-type model" during that decade because it had moved accounting up to the brigade level, thus equalizing income between production teams. This was done in relatively few brigades in Huangdao. In 1978, the collective production value per person was 279 yuan. Agricultural yields here are higher because 80% of the land is served by a series of electric pumping stations, and the brigade has its own reservoir. On the average, the brigade produces 200 jin of wheat per mu more



than Gangtouzangjia, 300 more than Taitou. Agricultural income is boosted further by permission to grow peanuts as a commercial crop on 46% of the land during the summer cropping period. As a related sideline, the brigade owns and operates an oil pressing shop.

Of brigade income here, 55% comes from brigade-owned sidelines. In addition to the oil pressing shop there is a grain mill, a noodle-making shop, a kelp farm at the nearby seaside (though this is not a maritime brigade otherwise), and a mink ranch. Future plans include a modern chicken farm. They have not expanded into vegetable farming because of the sandy quality of the soil. However, brigade lands hold a valuable resource, namely the sand and stone quarries that are supplying some of the building materials to Huangdao oilport, and more recently to Qingdao itself. This resource has done much to fund capital construction and diversification for the collective.

The second local model, also in Xuejiadao Commune, is Zhuchadao Brigade. This is a much-publicized model, both for the local area and for Shandong Province. It too has been a model since the early 1970s. It is a small community of only 550 persons, which, as in the case of Guanting, facilitated moving accounting to the brigade level. It differs in that it is a fishing village, located on a hilly island south of Jiaozhou Bay. And it is markedly richer: The collective gross value of production per capita is around 1500 yuan.

Fishing is the main source of income. Zhuchadao won the status of provincial model in 1975 for its overall performance as a fishing brigade. It was specifically commended for breaking with tradition and organizing a "March 8 Fishing Boat," that is, a boat with an all-female crew. Sea-fishing is a male occupation, and the experiment was short-lived. By 1978, fishing had again become an all-male occupation.<sup>8</sup>

There are also lucrative sidelines. Since the reorganization of political boundaries and affiliation with Qingdao, the village has become the site of an experimental station for the Shandong Provincial Oceanography Institute, which is headquartered in Qingdao. A research team from the institute lives in the village

and works closely with the members on tank raising of abalone and bêche-de-mer. Both are very expensive gourmet delicacies. There is further income from the brigade's kelp farm and mink ranch.

From the brigade accounts, it is clear that agriculture provides no more than 4% of collective gross income. But even though it is a tiny part of the total economy, it looms large politically. Despite limited land, the brigade is self-sufficient in grain production. Some of the present farm land is hillside terraces constructed in the late 1960s and early 1970s, following injunctions to "learn from Dazhai." In 1976, Zhuchadao received a commendation banner from the provincial government, honoring it as a "Dazhai-type advanced model." The presence of a freshwater pool on the island makes irrigation possible. Grain productivity equals or surpasses that of Guanting, but since the person/land ratio is only half a mu, Zhuchadao is not expected to sell any grain to the state, and can keep the surplus for animal husbandry.

In traditional China, fishermen were ranked toward the very bottom of the class hierarchy. And before Liberation, this island community was a refuge for the landless and propertyless. Many lived by fishing, working as hired labor for a few boat owners, or doing coastal fishing from small sail junks. Others sought off-island employment as seasonal and day laborers or itinerant peddlers. At land reform, those working in agricultural villages were not included in the land distribution, and were pressured to return to Zhuchadao. Some of those who had been working for Qingdao boat owners were luckier: They were absorbed as crew members in the new cooperative fishing units operating out of Qingdao's harbor, and although their village was not part of Qingdao, they were able to pass these "urban" jobs down to one of their sons. Those who returned to the island received state assistance, in the form of loans of state grain, and help in building up a small fishing fleet of sail junks. By 1955, they were organized as a fishing cooperative, and owned a few boats with 20 horsepower motors.

The real advance came after 1966, when large state loans were made available to modernize the fishing fleet. The junks, which took a crew of four, were gradually replaced by larger craft with

100 horsepower motors. Their fishing grounds extended south to Shanghai and north to Bohai Bay. The attendant rise in productivity made it easy to repay the loans within one or two years, and to invest further in the development of the fishing fleet and related sidelines such as net-making and boat repairs. To give some idea of growth, 20 fishermen, working from a pair of the older 20 horsepower boats, bring in a yearly profit of around 7000 yuan. The same number of people working a pair of 100 horsepower boats bring in a profit of 30,000 yuan, and the same crews on the newest 185 horsepower boats bring in a profit of 40,000 yuan. The collective still retains some sail junks for coastal fishing, and some of the older smaller boats are in use, but the majority of the fishermen are on the large long-distance boats and are away from the village for much of the year.

With rising profits from fishing, and with expanding sideline enterprises, the per capita income in this unit far outstrips that in any of the farming villages in Huangdao. The distributed collective per capita income in 1979 was 315 yuan. This did not include bonus distributions (averaging another 27 yuan per person), and the pocket money given to members of the fishing crews during their months away from the village. That sum, if distributed evenly among the population, would come to an additional 38 yuan. In short, the average collective distribution per person comes close to 380 yuan, an income level double that found in any of the agricultural brigades in the area, and equal to or surpassing that of most urban factory workers, low-level technicians, and lower level intellectual workers.

## DISCUSSION

Taitou was periodically instructed to observe and learn from these three different models in its immediate neighborhood, and to try to emulate them. Brigade leaders from various units in Huangdao had been to visit them. Commune leaders were more likely to make visits to more distant provincial models. There are, of course, new models at this writing that demonstrate the suc-

cessful workings of the various responsibility systems inaugurated since 1980, but we are only discussing those that were operative during the 1970s. During that decade, and in some years previous, decisions about the direction and content of development were not in the hands of the leadership of the brigades and their constituent teams. Taitou's choice of crops, and the area assigned to those crops, were determined by the commune leadership in response to guidelines set by higher levels of administration. Access to new machinery, to chemical fertilizers, to water-supply systems relied on commune-level decisions and agreement by higher levels of administration. The same was true for acquisition of raw materials and technology for certain sideline enterprises and for obtaining purchase contracts for the commodities produced.

During the 1950s, and the early years of the commune system, when Taitou still retained a more diversified cropping pattern, it operated an oil press and a bean curd processing shop, both carryovers of pre-Liberation enterprises. Both were closed down when cropping patterns were changed, since local supply dropped sharply, and continuation of these service industries was no longer warranted for local use, let alone outside sale. Similarly, Taitou operated a carpentry shop during the 1950s, producing tools, school desks and benches, and household furniture. At the start of the Cultural Revolution, this sideline was discontinued and the skilled work force transferred to grain production. At the end of the Cultural Revolution, attempts to revitalize the workshop were unsuccessful. The supply of materials was not available under the state plans for allocation of lumber. Fortunately, skilled carpenters were needed in Huangdao, and that is where Taitou's carpenters were deployed as contract workers.

If Taitou were to move out of the nongrowth stagnation situation that it has been in for the past two decades, Gangtouzangjia would be the most attainable model. To emulate it simply requires that Taitou be allowed to resume its earlier, more flexible patterns of land use, shifting some of its grain lands into more profitable commercial crops. The villagers have had experience and success in the past growing peanuts and soybeans. The land shift

would probably not even decrease their grain sales to the state since the addition of soybeans into the local diet would instead decrease local grain consumption. The protein content of a pound of soybeans is equal to that found in five pounds of grain. The village also had success in the past growing vegetables, melons, and cotton. There are a number of options, some of which have possibly gone into effect since the time of the research. But even under the more flexible new economic policies, the growing of commercial crops on a large scale depends on state demand and whether units are able to contract with state purchasing agencies.

Expansion into vegetable production seems unlikely. At the time of the research, the district-level administration assigned vegetable growing only to a handful of brigades within the total district, while bringing in a great part of the produce needed in Huangdao town from outside, primarily from Jiaoxian. The stated reason was that vegetables from Jiaoxian were of better quality; the alternative of upgrading vegetable production within the district did not seem to be under consideration. There is a potentially larger market in Qingdao proper. However, between 1949 and 1977 it was the brigades in Qingdao's eastern suburbs that were developed as vegetable brigades. In the post-Cultural Revolution reorganization of the municipality, the new western suburbs were not included in municipal planning for food supply. Rather, the eastern suburbs' brigades were assisted in developing hothouses for year-round vegetable production. Press reports from the area through 1980-1981 still focused on specialized vegetable production in Laoshan and eastern district suburbs of the city.

These constraints are minor compared to the difficulties of emulating Guanting Brigade. That would require far more state cooperation and assistance. It is possible that over the next decade, Taitou will be helped to develop its own system of electric pumping stations and will be linked to a reservoir. With improved irrigation, it would have higher productivity in grain agriculture and production of other crops. It would have a higher personal income, and the funds and labor power to develop industrial and agricultural sidelines. Given its nearness to Huangdao and Qingdao, in time Taitou might be given some processing work

to do by state factories, or it might be encouraged to supply the town and city with processed foodstuffs (noodles, bean curd, bean paste) or craft items for household use such as baskets or brooms. Emulation of the Guanting model would be furthered if Taitou were to discover that its lands held some valuable natural resource equivalent to the quarries that funded part of Guanting's development. In the early years of the commune, Taitou tried to develop a small iron mine on its lands. Unfortunately, the ore was judged to be of too low a quality for industrial use, and the operation was closed down after a short time. Had it worked out differently, Taitou might have become one of the most advanced units within its commune, and comparable to Guanting.

The provincial model at Zhuchadao falls within the realm of "the impossible dream," not only for Taitou but for most, if not all, agricultural brigades. Zhuchadao can be exempted from grain sale quotas, but state planning must assure a sufficient flow of grain to the urban areas and for support of all those state-salaried workers assigned to the rural areas.<sup>9</sup> While the levels of required grain production that are markedly above the needs of the local community may be reduced to some extent, they cannot be sharply cut back or abolished within a large number of brigades. China has explicitly stated, time and time again, its determination to be self-sufficient in grain production on the national level, and to keep its grain imports at a minimum. And even if some grain brigades were allowed to move entirely into production of high-value specialty crops for internal circulation and for export, it is hard to imagine them producing anything near the value that comes from fishing and fisheries production. It is worth noting here that within the Huangdao District as a whole, the 28 fishing brigades annually produced 5,000,000 yuan of income, while the 89 farming brigades together produced 6,000,000 yuan of income. This difference occurred at a time when only 25% of the fishing industry had been "modernized." By now, the income gap must be even greater. Grain production is necessary, it consumes the lands and energies of most brigades in China, and even with recent price increases the peasants cannot become rich from growing grain. The best they can hope for is to develop additional crops and sidelines, but even these tend to be modest in their returns compared to Zhuchadao's ventures.

Moreover, the particular model of Zhuchadao required state assistance on a much larger scale than that offered to agricultural brigades. There is a real question about whether the state can make the same level of monetary loans and technical assistance available to more than a handful of villages. Zhuchadao is, at best, a model for other fishing brigades, not for Taitou and villages like it. There are relatively few fishing villages in China compared to the tens of thousands of farming villages.

Of course, Zhuchadao is not presented as a model of successful state assistance in local economic development. It is presented as an illustration of the principles of "self-reliance" and of the correctness and value of taking the socialist road. It is (or was) meant to demonstrate that organization as a total collective can transform a poverty-stricken community into one whose wealth far surpasses that of the neighboring countryside, and whose standard of living is equivalent to that of the urban population. It is also meant to demonstrate that the rural areas can increase their wealth through development of technology for exploiting their own natural resources; they do not need to look to a transfer of industries and materials from the cities as a way of raising income.

These aspects of the model have considerable truth to them. But what the model really demonstrates (and what is *not* discussed in the briefings about Zhuchadao or many other model brigades) is that a unit with a potentially high production value can achieve that potential if it is assisted with loans, technical advice, and purchase requisitions for the needed technology, not to mention the added input of high morale that comes with continuous encouragement and public praise for each economic advance that is made.

Thus, while the members of Taitou admired, and to some extent envied, the progress made by the models with which they were confronted, it was at the same time clear to them that such results were not immediately attainable. Without permission and assistance from levels higher than the brigade they were not attainable at all, and a statement of brigade intention or desire to emulate Gangtouzangjia or Guanting or Zhuchadao would be meaningless. When Taitou's income suddenly rose as a result of contract labor and transport work, most of the money went for increased personal income and for construction of new housing—

the latter in response to regional directives that called for a concentrated and uniform housing plan in each village. That the new money did not go into mechanization of agriculture, improved irrigation, or diversification of the team and brigade economies was not the fault of the brigade leadership. They had no authority to do anything other than what they did. Perhaps more money could have gone into brigade savings (and less into income distribution) in hopes that someday soon economic policies would become more flexible, and the brigade would then have a reserve of working capital with which to improve and expand the village collective economy. That option would have seemed unrealistic before 1981 in Shandong. Even after the fall of the Gang of Four, the explicit policy for the communes in the Huangdao District and elsewhere in the province was "take grain as the key link," a policy continued until late in 1980. The only concessions came in the form of reopening the periodic peasant markets, and the relaxation of some restrictions on household production and sale of pigs, poultry, rabbits, garden produce from private plots, and some household-produced handicrafts. Otherwise, policies continued as they had been during the Cultural Revolution, with the commune and district or county levels of administration retaining tight control over agricultural production and over all collective sidelines. This control could not be circumvented. The question of allowing teams and brigades to make their own decisions about land use was not even raised in Taitou until the summer of 1980.

It seems reasonable to speculate that the low level of assistance and encouragement given to most of the brigades in the district, even after it was reorganized as a suburban area of a large industrial city, is connected to the high priority for rapid and economical completion of the oilport and its adjacent town. It was impossible to get any figures on the total costs or the percentages borne by the city and district compared to the money provided by the province and national government. However, it was clear that the costs of basic construction were kept down by utilizing local peasant labor. They were paid at the lower levels of the urban worker salary scale, and without the additional benefits of medical coverage, education costs for their children, or payments toward retirement pensions. Their dependents remained in their home



villages: there was no need to provide additional permanent housing for them. All in all, the new urban complex was being built by using the local labor that could be spared from agricultural work, which meant that it was being built in the cheapest possible way.

Had there been equal emphasis on strengthening and diversifying the economies of the area's teams, brigades, and communes, money would have had to be diverted away from the oilport. At the same time, surplus peasant labor would have been diverted away from the oilport, and absorbed into new collective enterprises in their home units. Thus, development of the rural sector occurred on a limited scale, large enough so that the district leaders could point to instances of development, but small enough that it did not interfere with the primary tasks at hand, namely construction of an oilport of national significance, and the maintenance of high levels of grain sales to the state.

Seen in this light, model villages in China are something other than what they are intended to be. They are not examples for other communities to imitate. They are not even social laboratories in which technicians and social scientists plan for change, guide change, and overcome the supposed problems of peasant conservatism, backwardness, and resistance to innovations. Neither are they, one hastens to point out, Potemkin villages in the sense of being fraudulent. They are functioning collectives with real people benefiting from them. But they resemble the pilot projects one finds in a number of Third World countries. They are demonstration models, funded sometimes by their own governments, sometimes by international development agencies or private foundations (Rockefeller, Ford, and the like) or combinations thereof. They show that rural development can be done, if from somewhere there are loans, new technology and scientific information, and new marketing alternatives for what is produced. They are good places to bring foreign visitors to, but I think most Third World governments recognize the futility of bringing the surrounding peasantry to look at them and the frustration that might be aroused by urging other communities to emulate them.

Since 1980, peasant income has improved, reportedly for a large number of households. This is due to the restoration and expansion of household private plots, permission to expand household

sidelines or even develop small collective sidelines between several households, the legitimization of "key households" that specialize in livestock or poultry production (or similar specializations), and the institution of various kinds of responsibility systems in agriculture. Income has also risen due to encouragement to plant some commercial crops, particularly cotton and oil-bearing crops in Shandong. Undoubtedly, some households in Taitou are better off than they were a few years ago. But this new liberalization does little or nothing to develop team and brigade collective industries. A front-page article in the *People's Daily* as late as November 3, 1982, discussed the continuation of "Left influences" in Shandong, with specific reference to comparatively low levels of distribution from the collective economy, failure to grasp fully the responsibility systems, difficulties in marketing, and the failure to develop collective industrial sidelines or to relax the restrictions on production of small commodities.

It would seem that the basic model of the well-rounded, diversified village collective, which was urged upon Taitou from 1956 to 1980, is still not realizable, and that political decisions from levels higher than the brigade still shape and control rural development.

## NOTES

1. A total of five months of field research in Taitou (summer 1979, February 1980, and summer 1980) was conducted with the support of a grant from the Social Science Research Council Sub-Committee on the Economy of China, and with the cooperation and assistance of the Shandong Provincial Bureau of Foreign Affairs and Shandong University. I would like to thank all of these organizations for making the research possible.

2. Wages earned by peasant contract workers are paid directly to the brigade or team. The worker receives his or her earnings partly in grain and other commodities produced by the rural work unit, and partly in cash. These payments are in line with the earnings of agricultural workers in the brigade or team, that is, in terms of the value of the collective workday in the home unit. Since the urban wages are generally higher than the rural workday, the peasant worker does not receive his or her full earnings. It is shared out among everyone in the collective.

3. See *Beijing Review* (January 19, 1981: 5), which gives a figure of 102 yuan as average per capita net income from collective distribution for all of rural China in 1979. The same issue, on page 26, provides information on Yantai prefecture in Shandong, which had an average distribution of 156 yuan. In contrast, Shandong's western counties of Dezhou and Licheng were averaging around 50 yuan in 1979, a figure that rose to 90 yuan the following year when cotton farming was reintroduced.

4. A mu equals one-sixth of an acre or one-fifteenth of a hectare. A jin is equal to half a kilo.

5. This is still low in comparison to wheat yields in the north and central areas of the province. Huangdao has a maritime climate and poor soils that are less suited to wheat production. Yields are low even with irrigation and application of chemical fertilizer, but such ecological factors were not taken into account in setting a program of "grain as the key link" with wheat as the key crop.

6. There are materials on Taitou's cropping patterns dating from the 1920s and 1930s, as reported in Martin Yang (1945). Millet and sweet potatoes were the two main staple crops at that time, with winter wheat and barley as additional main crops. In the summer, by Yang's account, close to 60% of the land was given over to sweet potatoes, peanuts, and soy beans. Swampy lands near the river were used for rice. The brigade accounts from the early 1960s on reflect a policy of putting increasing amounts of land into wheat and corn, phasing out millet, barley, and miscellaneous grain crops, and reducing the acreage for commercial crops in order to increase overall grains production.

7. Commune and district leaders seemed to regard Taitou as a more "politically backward" village. It was not clear whether this evaluation was based on recent events or was a carryover from the past. Taitou was not only a heavily middle peasant village, it had also been the seat of a Catholic church, a Protestant church, and affiliated church schools prior to Liberation.

8. Similar to Zhuchadao in many respects, including the publicity given to its all-woman fishing crew, is the provincial model of Dayudao Brigade on the eastern tip of Shandong. It is also the subject of a one-hour documentary film made by Joris Ivens in the mid-1970s.

9. The majority of commune cadres (administrators) as well as the personnel of the commune hospital, the secondary school, the post office, the bank, and various shops in the commune center all "eat state grain." Unlike peasant commune members, they are paid salaries, from which they purchase their grain, rather than being included in the grain distributions of the local rural collectives.

## REFERENCES

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