

## Mapping the Rural Community

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CHIAO CHI MING

**T**HE term "rural community" has been defined by Professor Walter Burr of Kansas State Agricultural College, as "a population group in an agricultural area of such size and unity to permit its citizens to co-operate readily in group activities." The chief group activities of common interest to the rural population in China are business, educational, religious and social. The significance of rural community units in developing the rural church is quite evident. One way of most clearly apprehending the detailed information which a survey of a rural community brings to light, is to map it.

Such a survey and map have been recently made by the writer, of the Yao Hwa Men area near Nanking. Yao Hwa Men is a market town and the rural community of which it is the business center includes seventy-two villages, one modern school, thirty old fashioned schools, three temples, and is traversed by the Shanghai-Nanking Railway.

Preliminary information was secured from the school teachers, from one of the leading merchants, from the village leader, from the temple and from a prominent farmer. After the survey had been explained to them, they were quite willing to help. The merchants furnished the names of the villages that traded there and these were located on the map as accurately as possible.

After visiting the market town, each village was in turn visited and all the information secured at the market center was checked by questioning the villages. In this way fairly accurate data were secured. A rather incomplete military map and a postal map furnished an outline on which the unindicated villages and their positions and distances from the market town were indicated. It will be noted on the map that some villages in the area have two market centers with which they trade. Also that the larger worship area includes several minor temples, but that no serious conflict is involved. The large trade area, the large worship area and the modern school area are easily and clearly fixed.

Each farm village has its worship place and the temples are the chief centers of their religious activities. Although the villages differ on many other matters, in religious life and activities they are one. Idol worship functions more strongly in binding the farmers into a group than any other influence. All matters of good and evil, prosperity and misfortune are handled by the idols. Incense burning is an important institution. The idols largely dominate human activities and thus effectively retard community progress. The local divinities or agricultural gods are worshipped twice a year during the lunar second and seventh months. The small worship areas are indicated on the map.

The large worship area serves a radius of 20 *li* and all the villagers make an annual pilgrimage to the temple. Each large village has its own worship club, but several of the smaller villages usually co-operate together to organize a small worship club. Each club has its own name given to it by its members and often reflects the dominant interests of the club membership. Each club also has a president and a business manager, chosen by turn each year. The order of the name list is posted on a permanent wall for this purpose in a prominent place in the village. The meetings of the club are held either in the home of one of the farmers or in the tea shop.

The funds to be collected for the expenses of the worship are divided equally among the farm families. If a family does not wish to attend

the annual worship at the big temple, no money is collected from them. March is usually the month of worship and on a prearranged date the club goes to the temple. The incense, paper money and perhaps local musicians are prepared by the president and business manager of the club. The members of the club proceed to the temple in a body. The worshippers kneel before the altar and after the incense is burned, it is placed in the incense box by the president. After this act of worship, the priest asks the president for a contribution. The name of the club subscribing the largest amount is put on a stone tablet roll of honor. During the day, the members of the club are fed from the public funds of the club. Custom prescribes that the president shall contribute the largest amount of money. The same process is repeated each year.

In the same way the business interests of the area can be learned. Space forbids giving all the details which loom so large in the village life of the market town and the surrounding villages, but it will help us to picture the simplicity of the farmers' wants by listing the principal products which supply their daily demands.

1. Groceries: The principal items handled in the grocery shop are oils, salt, sauce, vinegar, wine, papers, eggs, cigarettes, cane sugar and candy. The goods which the farmers are most in need of and buy for home use are, oils, salt, sauce, vinegar and paper. The wine, sugar, cigarettes and candy are, for the most part, sold to the people who live in the market town. The outside farmers consume very small quantities of these commodities.

2. House Furniture and Farm Implements: The carpenter shops are the most important shops in the market village because most of the farm tools and house furniture are supplied by them. The demands of the farmers constitute a large share of the business of these shops, principally for new farm implements and repairs. Bamboo products, such as flails, brooms and baskets are also furnished by them.

3. Cloth Shops: The rough cotton cloth worn by the farmers constitutes the principal article for sale. Small quantities of finer cloths such as silk, cotton and wool can be bought, but the demand is largely limited to wedding garments.

4. Meat Shops: There are two meat shops, but business is not good because the majority of the farmers do not eat meat. This is because the meat is more expensive than the grains. Pork and beef are the chief meats. Most of the meat consumers live in the market town. The farmers seldom have meat except at weddings, funerals or the New Year holiday. Twenty years ago there were many meat shops in the market town, but at present these two are maintained with difficulty because of the fact that farm products are more expensive. The grains which were formerly fed to cattle, are now used directly as human food.

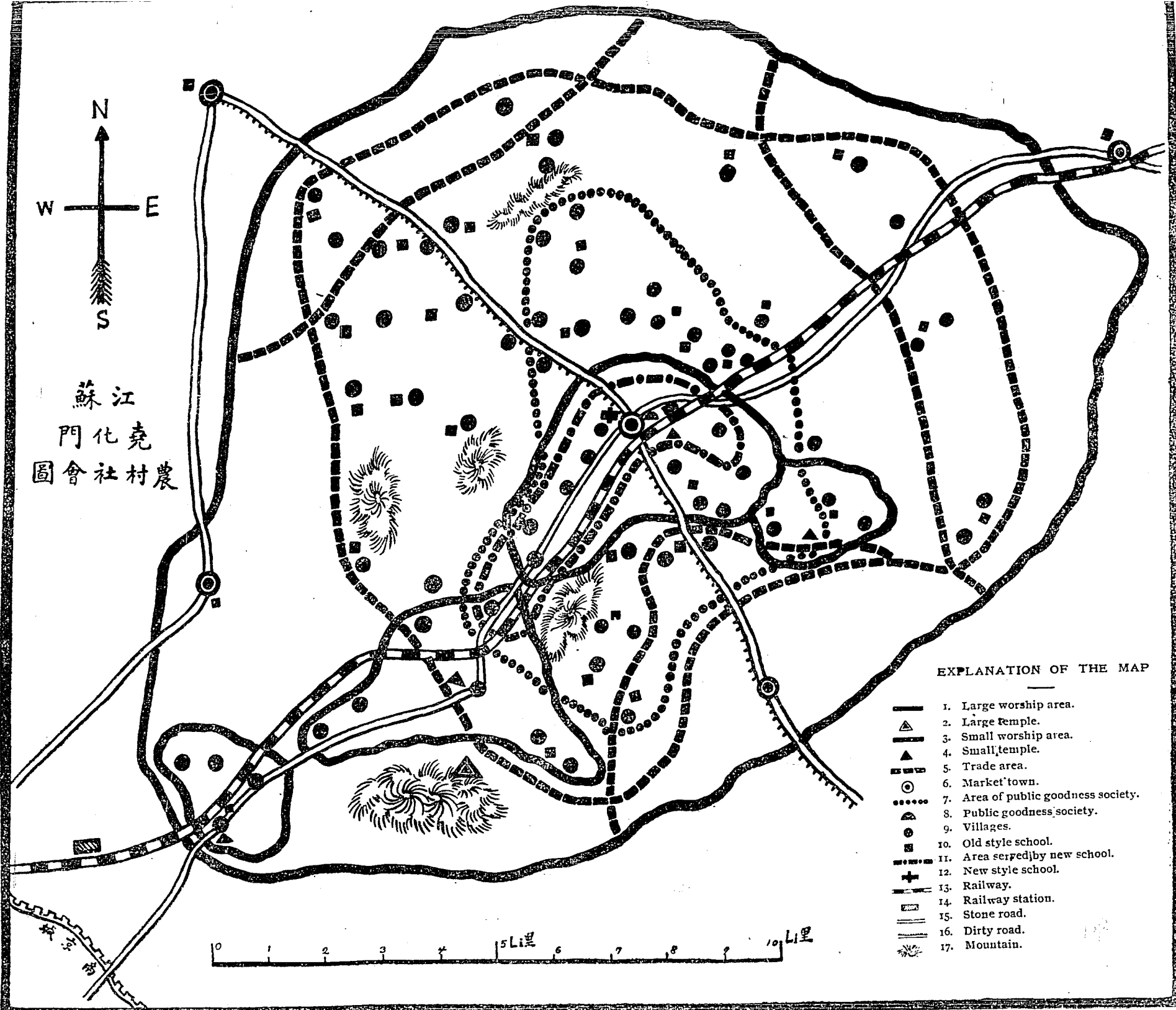
Most of the farmers within this rural community get their green vegetables from the Yao Hwa Men market. Farmers bring their eggs to the market each market day and use them in exchange for other goods which they wish to take back. When the farmers need money, they ordinarily sell grain to the grain shop. The largest part of the farmer's production must be sold immediately after harvest in order to pay their rents or the debts which have been incurred during the past year. Interest on borrowed money is as high as 40-50% per year. Grain shops are the chief money lenders. Money is paid back in the form of grain as soon as the harvest is finished.

The survey discloses one interesting character; a good man who lent money to the farmers at a much more reasonable rate of interest. He usually charged about 25% per year, but the farmers who borrowed money from him had to show how they wanted to use the loan. If a productive purpose was involved, the loan was made; if it was a cash loan to be used for gambling and drinking purposes, it was refused. If loans made were misused and the lender discovered it, the borrower was brought back and severely punished. The influence of this good money lender was felt throughout the district and has resulted in much less gambling and drinking among the farmers. This money lender is a strong local leader and is very eager to improve the rural conditions of the community.

The social service activities are few. One organization, known as "the public goodness society" was found. The society is not free from political influences. The members of the society are strong believers in the doctrines of Buddhism, and their chief activity is to furnish medicine for the poor, who during the summertime become sick and are unable to see a doctor. The society has two officers; a chairman and a business manager elected by the members of the society. The influence of this society is shown on the map.

Both modern and old time educational facilities exist. The new school located in the market town draws its students from a number of villages, all of them, it is interesting to note, located along a modern stone road. The area of influence of this school is plotted on the map and its relation to the new road should be noted. All the other villages have an old fashioned school of their own or co-operate with a nearby village in maintaining a school. The modern school is a two teacher school, both teachers with normal school training.

In all the thirty old style village schools, the old time methods of teaching are used, the emphasis placed on writing and memorizing and nothing is done to give the students any knowledge that would serve them in any practical way in their everyday living.



EXPLANATION OF THE MAP

- 1. Large worship area.
- 2. Large temple.
- 3. Small worship area.
- 4. Small temple.
- 5. Trade area.
- 6. Market town.
- 7. Area of public goodness society.
- 8. Public goodness society.
- 9. Villages.
- 10. Old style school.
- 11. Area served by new school.
- 12. New style school.
- 13. Railway.
- 14. Railway station.
- 15. Stone road.
- 16. Dirty road.
- 17. Mountain.

SEE ARTICLE "MAPPING THE RURAL COMMUNITY."

NOTE: The scale on the map is indicated by Chinese li. Each division indicates 1 Chinese li. The distances are measured from the market center to the different villages by using this scale.

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It would seem to be quite evident that the above information and more that has been collected and for which there has not been space to present, would be of very great value to any missionary, pastor or Christian teacher who is trying to Christianize any rural community. A few days will suffice to secure the bulk of the information, and the mapping of this information when secured helps to get it more clearly in mind and to keep it before one in planning and carrying out Christian educational or evangelistic work.

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