

# THE YENCHING JOURNAL OF SOCIAL STUDIES

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# YENCHING JOURNAL OF SOCIAL STUDIES

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# Consumers' Preference and Planning

## I

This paper is an attempt to discuss some of the problems which arise when the economist tries to give advice on practical questions. I think that it is clear that he should try. People feel at present that economic conditions are such that something must be done about them, and things are being done by people who know nothing whatever about economics. No doubt the body of knowledge and method required for dealing with practical problems can be divided into Economics, Psychology, Political Philosophy, and so on, but for any action mutual understanding is necessary. A group consisting of pure economists, pure politicians, pure psychologists, and pure philosophers might have all the knowledge for the satisfactory solution of social problems, but if they were all so specialized that they could not understand one another they would be absolutely useless.

In Europe the pronouncements of economists meet with little respect. The ordinary man thinks that no two economists agree about anything, that their theories are based on out of date psychological assumptions and are too abstract to be of any use in real life. If economists are to be effective, they must make a clear distinction between statements which are pure economics and those which are based on assumptions about psychology, ethics, and politics; and also realize that the range within which they can make statements which can claim to be purely scientific is a very limited one.

Robbins, in *An Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science*, makes purely scientific economics a system of

deductions of the implications of choice. Sir Josiah Stamp puts nearly the same view in a more popular form when he says, "An astonishing amount of economics is contained in the sentiment that you cannot get more than a pint out of a pint pot nor more than you have put into it." Economics on these lines may be called purely scientific because it does not depend on any assumptions about the way in which people behave or about the goodness or badness of any action. It only assumes that pint pots will not become widows' cruises and the non-existence of Alladin's lamp.

Much of the popular distrust of economics has arisen because economists have not realized the very limited extent to which they can make purely scientific statements without any psychological or ethical assumptions. According to Keynes' biographies both Marshall and Edgeworth started with the view that utility was something definite and measurable, in some way similar to the concepts of physical science. Although they modified this view in later life, they never fully faced the implications of this change in the basis of their theories. Other economists have been much more dogmatic, and it is easy to give examples of the fallacy of misplaced concreteness. The story is told of one case where, when someone cast doubt on the reality of consumers' surplus, the lecturer pointed to an area on the board and said, "But there it is." The Rignano inheritance scheme is another very good example, though very nice in theory it would in fact ensure that the upper classes in society would almost all be idle *nouveaux riches*.<sup>1</sup>

There has always been a tendency to extend the status of scientific statement to propositions which are in fact based on all sorts of psychological and ethical assumptions. In some ways the Austrian school, who are the strongest exponents of economics as a pure science, are among the worst offenders. On the one hand they do not like to admit that they are making any non-verifiable assumptions, and on the other they wish to be able to make pro-

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<sup>1</sup> The principle of the scheme is that inheritance tax on any fortune should increase with successive passings of the property, reaching 100% at the third or fourth stages.

nouncements about practical policy. The result is a curious identification, probably largely unconscious, of the social optimum with the state in which the working of the economic system depends least on the unpredictable element of the conscious choice of particular individuals. The parable in which Sombart criticizes Spann really applies equally well to the orthodox Austrian school. He compares Spann to the man who, when asked by his sweetheart, "Am I the only girl you have ever kissed?" replied, "Yes, and the prettiest too." Spann starts off with 'prettiest' and says 'therefore only', while Mises and Mayer start off with 'only' and say 'therefore the perfect type of female beauty'.

This bad habit of putting everything as scientific statement has often led the critics of economics to pour away the baby with the bath, so to speak, to neglect the large part of economic theory which was really scientific and in their own theories to make many statements which are just nonsense. Robbins makes very strong remarks about the people who do this.<sup>2</sup> These criticisms are not entirely fair. It is certainly a great pity that men like Ruskin and Carlyle did not see that a lot of economic theory could be restated so as to be independent of the assumptions on which the economists said it was based. Their work would have certainly been much more effective if they had seen it, but why should the necessary revision of economics have been left to them? There may be important truths in the writings of the British Israelites and there are certainly some sound ideas in the writings of Major Douglas or in *Mein Kampf*, but it is surely right to assume that there can be little correlation between the truth and the views of people who believe in the message of the great pyramid or the  $A + B$  theorem. There is sound common sense in the remark of the 17th century Master of Balliol who concludes the legendary history of the patron saint of his college by saying, "The strangeness of some parts of this relation are enough to make a man doubt the truth of the whole." The attitude of 19th century economists such as

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<sup>2</sup> Lionel Charles Robbins, *An Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science*, 1st ed., London, 1932, p. 26 and 84.

Nassau Senior<sup>3</sup> to such questions as the factory acts is surely enough to excuse a certain amount of blindness on the part of their critics to the element of truth in their theories.

The basis of pure economics, that it makes no assumptions about the rules of human behavior, involves a very big limitation. This pure economics can only give a framework of conditions within which real events happen. Its relation to actual economic policies is like that of geometry to architecture or engineering. Any house or machine must be such that it will fit into three-dimensional Euclidean space. Architects do occasionally draw plans which imply some kind of queer multi-dimensional space in which two things can occupy the same place at the same time, *e.g.* in which a window on the plan comes at the same place as a chimney in the elevation. In economic questions people continually make mistakes of this kind. People continually say that there cannot be equilibrium in the trade between two countries with different standards of living, and many of the 'giving work' arguments would, if valid, logically prove the criminal to be a social benefactor.

When the economist wishes to do more than refute other peoples' arguments or to construct purely hypothetical systems, he must make some assumptions about human behavior. He must take some particular system of choices whose implications he wishes to work out. Even if he wishes to remain a purely technical expert taking no part in decisions, he must work out systems of the implications of the choices which are likely to be made. If he wishes to be an advisor and not merely a consultant, he must also take the responsibility of judging the relative values of different policies.

As a purely practical point it seems that at the present time very few of those responsible for government are capable of using

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<sup>3</sup> Nassau Senior argued that all the profits of the cotton industry came from the last hours of work and that a reduction of working hours to 10 per day would ruin the entire industry.

pure economists as consultants and that a sense of their duty as citizens should therefore lead economists to take the responsibility of trying to become advisors. A community cannot be run on a rigid principle of limited liability.

## II

The idea of consumers' preference is used in attempts to extend the scope of economics with the minimum of implications in psychology and ethics. Two different uses can be distinguished. The first is purely descriptive. It is said that the economist is not concerned with the psychological principles underlying actions. All he need do is to study the way in which people actually behave and the choices they actually make and base his theories on that. This is a perfectly sound method within a limited range, but except over very short periods of time there are very few systems of human action which it is possible to describe without any psychological assumptions. It is safe to make empirical generalizations that people usually prefer large incomes to small ones (though even this may not be true in Russia) and that indifference curves are usually concave, but in the majority of cases consumers' preference is itself a variable which is changed by the other factors under consideration. Except over very short periods any theory which takes consumers' preference as a constant will be very unrealistic. (The extreme case is the theory of advertisement where the whole point is the changing of consumers' preference.)

The second use of consumers' preference is an ethical one. Many pronouncements by economists imply some position such as this: — The economic system exists to satisfy peoples' wants as far as possible; people express their wants by their willingness to pay for things; therefore the best economic system is that which gives the greatest satisfaction to peoples' money demands, whatever they may be. This position or something very like it is implied in most of Robbins' pronouncements, and it is very

common in economic discussion to hear the arguments that if people are willing in fact to pay for something it shows that it is what they really want.

It is possible to deny the major premise of this argument: that the economic system exists to give people what they want. Fascists might say that it exists to secure the future of the race or to increase the power of the state, and some types of religion stress the beauties of poverty. Or take the conversation between Lord Edward Tantamount and Everard Webley in Huxley's *Point Counterpoint*. " 'Do you want a political and social revolution?' 'Will it reduce the population and check production?', asked Lord Edward. 'Of course.' 'Then certainly I want a revolution.' The old Man thought in terms of geology and was not afraid of logical conclusions." The issues raised, however, are too wide to discuss here, but even if the major premise (that the economic system exists to satisfy peoples' wants), is admitted, the minor may be denied (that willingness to pay adequately expresses wants).

There are three main reasons for the divergence of consumers' preference, expressed in money, from real wants:— (1) inequality of incomes; (2) wants which might be expressed in money but which cannot create a demand in the market; (3) the divergence between long and short term choice.

The first of these, inequality of incomes, is fairly obvious and has often been discussed. The wants of a rich man receive a much greater weighting in their effects on the market than those of a poor man. The question of how far equality is desirable is too large a topic to discuss here; but there is probably fairly general agreement that within a community the necessities of life for some of its members are more important wants than the luxuries of others, even if the distribution of incomes attaches less money demand to them. Before it can be said that money demand is an accurate expression of the wants of the community as a whole, it must be assumed that the distribution of incomes is such that it gives the right weighting to the wants of all the

members of it. In existing communities this assumption will not in general be justified.

A very good example of the second, preferences which cannot create a market demand, is given by Ruskin in one of his criticisms of economics.<sup>4</sup> He describes how he saw first a beautiful place which had become dirty and hideous for want of a little work and then a public house where a great deal of work had been spent on ugly and useless decoration. He says, "Now how did it come to pass that this work was done instead of the other; that the strength and life of the English operative was spent in defiling ground instead of redeeming it, and in producing a largely, (in that place) valueless piece of metal which can be neither eaten or breathed, instead of medicinal fresh air and pure water?" He then goes on to answer the question by quite unsound economic theories, but the answer surely is that his preference for fresh air and pure water did not produce any demand on the market while that of the publican for ornament did. A cleaning of Carshalton pool might have benefited hundreds of people who might have each been willing to contribute something to the cost. (If Ruskin had lived near he would have probably have had it done at his own expense.) These preferences, however, without special organization, had no effect in producing money demand.

Cases like this may be of the greatest social importance. Three such very different people as J. L. Hammond,<sup>5</sup> Gertrud Hermes,<sup>6</sup> and Hitler<sup>7</sup> agree in believing that one of the reasons why the industrial revolution did not bring any increase in satisfaction to the workers in spite of their higher incomes was the absence of what Hammond calls common enjoyment. The town worker in the 18th century, even if he had low wages, lived in a place where there were beautiful common possessions which formed part of his life — not necessarily common ownership but

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<sup>4</sup> John Ruskin, *The Crown of Wild Olive*, London, 1866.

<sup>5</sup> J. L. Hammond, *The Bleak Age*, London, 1934.

<sup>6</sup> Gertrud Hermes, *Die Geistige Gestalt des Marxistischen Arbeiters*, Tübingen, 1926.

<sup>7</sup> Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, Munich, 1925.

things in which everyone could feel pride as a citizen. After the industrial revolution he lived in an industrial area where society gave him nothing which was not utilitarian in the narrowest sense of the word. The preoccupation with satisfying money wants produced a state of society in which the majority of the population were less satisfied than before.

It might be said that this type of demand could be satisfied if people would combine to make effective their demand for common enjoyment. This is sometimes true, but it is very hard to get any organization among people so loosely connected and still harder to assess fair payments. A money preference of, say £10, for a park is different from a preference of £10 for, say, a wireless set. The former is only likely to be satisfied if some of the people who want it are prepared to give much more than their fair share, either in money or in work at organizing.

There are also many cases where profits accrue to one group while much of the real cost is borne by others. In Professor Pigou's terminology there may be a difference between individual and social returns.<sup>8</sup> For example, a diminution in heavy traffic on the roads would be to the benefit of private motorists and of those living near main roads. It is possible that their monetary valuation of the inconvenience of heavy traffic may exceed the difference in cost between road and rail transport. Or again people may value the beauty of their native town. Many Londoners, for example, might have been prepared to pay Pinchin Johnson & Co. for not spoiling Carlton House Terrace. Such preferences, however, cannot produce any effects under a system of free markets.

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<sup>8</sup> It might be a more accurate classification to consider the difference between individual and social returns under a separate heading, but there is no very clear distinction between this and the organization of demand which could not otherwise affect the market. For example, pleasant surroundings might be obtained either through clearing away the ruins of old buildings (organization of consumers' demand into a form in which it can affect the market), or by preventing the erection of ugly new houses (correction of the difference between individual and social return). The real point is that in the case of divergence between individual and social return what the organization really wants to express is a negative money demand, and this can only be done by taxation or restriction.

It would be impossible for those who dislike heavy traffic to arrange to pay the extra cost of sending goods by rail. Common action is often taken to prevent building schemes by buying up sites but such payments may easily become mere blackmail. There might easily be companies like the one which A. P. Herbert suggested in *Punch* which was to buy up beauty spots and propose hideous building schemes while a subsidiary collected money to preserve the countryside and repurchased the sites at a large profit.

In all sorts of ways this difference between individual and social returns will cause free markets to produce results which are not the real satisfaction of consumers' wants. Anyone who sets up a new factory on the edge of London does not consider the effect in extra transport congestion, higher rents, etc. We cannot balance our dislike of smoke and dirt against the pleasantness of open fires or the usefulness of a car against the unpleasantness and dangers of traffic. To conclude, the consumer, under a system of free markets, can only express part of his real wants through money demand, however well considered the judgments which decide his expenditure, and the divergence is great enough to be of importance in any consideration of social policy. Perhaps the main point might be summarized by saying that though pleasant surroundings are very important in life yet they cannot be bought in the same way as other commodities.

The third point, the divergence between long and short term choice, is the most controversial part of this paper. The general thesis is that the divergence of consumers' judgments from considered choice will not be a random variation but will almost always be in the direction of a high rate of discount of the future, and that this produces effects which are often cumulative. To put it in individual terms: you can only make decisions as to what you really want if you are not muddled or worried or tired. If you once start living from hand to mouth and get thoroughly muddled, it is very hard to stop. This effect will be very important in determining conditions of work. Mr. Dobb's theory of wages is

based partly on the importance of the cumulative effect. Lower wages will increase the worker's rate of discount of the future and weaken his bargaining power, while high profits will raise the employer's standard of life which he will keep up at the expense of saving. Of course the worker's loss of bargaining power will largely be produced by the material condition that he has not got enough reserves for effective bargaining, but it is also true that poverty produces conditions in which the rate of discount of the future is very high. For example, in South Wales some shops raise their prices on the day of the week when unemployment pay is issued. An investment by the consumer of a few shillings as reserve would bring in an absolutely safe return of several hundred percent, but a great many people do not make it.

There is very strong evidence for saying that most people are dissatisfied when working at a job in which they are treated simply as machines. Those who have taught workers' classes say that most of the really dissatisfied people, who wish to smash modern society regardless of the consequences, came from factories employing American mass production methods. Dr. Lockhart, the medical officer of Boots Drug Co., in his lecture to the Marshall society at Cambridge on "Medicine as a Function of Industrial Management," explained that high labor turnover and sick-absence rates were largely symptoms of dissatisfaction with work and that one of the chief tasks of the medical staff was to insist that the management should show respect for the personalities of the workers.

It is sometimes said that the fact that people are willing to work in mass production factories for wages not very much above ordinary rates shows that the disadvantages of such work have been much overestimated. There are, however, many influences which make the actual effect of unpleasant work on the supply of labor less than what might be expected if the workers were able to make rational and considered choices. Superficially any job paying slightly more than the ordinary rates of wages is very attractive. The effect of unpleasant work is to produce

a feeling of muddle and dissatisfaction in which any clear consideration becomes steadily more difficult so that people will only realize to a very limited extent what is really making them dissatisfied. The result of bad conditions will be a high labor turnover and a readiness to strike on minor points of wage rates or trade union etiquette rather than an attempt to protest against the real grievances. (Probably the bureaucratic tendencies of trade union leaders will have some effect in making them dislike action on issues which cannot be stated in definite rules as can such questions as wage rates.) There will also be a tendency to try and compensate for unpleasant work by spending to the limit of income in order to get other satisfactions; and the acquiring of such a standard of life, especially if it is obtained by instalment buying, will cause an increase in the valuation of money income relative to conditions of work. A change to a way of life which might give much more real satisfaction could only be made at the expense of considerable temporary effort and even hardship.

The other important and cumulative divergence from rational choice may be caused by the growth of conventional necessities and conspicuous waste. To an increasing degree modern society offers as a substitute for all other satisfactions a succession of new toys and fashions. Veblen, in *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, shows what a very important part such motives as conspicuous waste play in determining consumption. Under modern conditions an increasing proportion of demand is directed to objects which give satisfaction only by enabling people to conform to fashions, and the influence of advertisement leads to rapidly changing fashions. There are sections of Western society in which these influences have caused an almost complete disappearance of intellectual or cultural activity. Mr. and Mrs. Gordon's *Star Dust in Hollywood*, for example, gives a frightful picture of middle class society in Los Angeles. "The wireless, the car, and the movies have become three insidious drugs; moral morphias that can render habitués insensible to any vacant spaces of mental life unfilled with thought." The comparison with morphia is

a good one. A continually rising amount of short term satisfaction does make people fairly happy, but the final result is to produce a state in which the lowering of stimulus is painful rather than its continuance pleasant and the deterioration in the powers of long term choice will in the long run produce disastrous results.

This analysis is not trying to tell people what they ought to want. It is only saying that to find out what they really want it is necessary to go behind immediate demands. Some people seem to think that there is something unscientific about this and that it is wrong to consider anything but behavior, or to try and go behind what people at any moment are willing to pay for. But it is surely scientific to consider all the available evidence. Behaviorism is really the old Common Law rule of evidence, that no one could be a witness in his own case, made into a dogma of scientific method. There is little reason to suppose that it will give better results here than it did in *Bardell vs. Pickwick*.

To a large extent people admit this difference between their long and short term choice. Life insurance advertisements say, "Are you likely to save money for investment as regularly as you would pay an insurance premium?" People often pay 10% on hire purchase when they have money in the savings bank getting only 2% or 3% because they do not trust themselves to replace their savings with the regularity which installment payments force on them. No one believes that the consumption of drugs should be decided by consumers' preference, and most countries restrict consumers' preference for alcohol. For society a cumulative drift to unconsidered judgments is slower and less obvious but perhaps, in the long run, as dangerous as a growth of alcoholism or drug addiction.

The drunkard or drug taker knows that his choice is wrong. William Seabrook, in *Asylum*, describes his condition in these words: — "I knew that I had lost my will in relation to alcohol. I knew that there was only left to me the wish — which is entirely different from the will — to be saved from my own weak-

ness. I repeat here, just as I repeated to my friends, over and over again, till they were sick of it, that I knew I was drinking myself to death, that I couldn't stop — and that I wanted to be stopped — by force." In the same way people might say, "We know that we are very much influenced by fashion and advertisement and spend a great deal on things which give only very temporary satisfaction, and the result is to give a very unpleasant kind of life. In so far as we can think clearly we see that a different ordering of life would be better, and we would welcome anything which would divert our money preference towards it." In the case of drink or drugs the cause of the bad long term effects is fairly obvious; but it requires much more reflection to see where the following of short term motives leads, and the following of short term motives destroys the power of reflection. In fact, in many modern societies few people ever try to think out what they really want. In any discussion of real wants it is, therefore, necessary to try and arrive at what they would decide that they really wanted if they ever thought about it. There is very strong evidence for saying that this would be something different from the short term wants they actually express. Many people express dissatisfaction with life although their money wants are satisfied far more freely than ever before. This dissatisfaction is often expressed directly, but it more usually takes the form of a search for subjective satisfaction or of sentimental barbarism. Also there is little effective opposition to the restriction of consumers' choice by policies which promise improvements in long term conditions.

Perhaps before going on to the subject of planning it might be best to summarize the argument so far. If the economist is to remain a pure scientist, he must confine himself to a very limited range of statements about general conditions of action, largely negative in character. When he wishes to be more realistic or to give advice, he must make assumptions about psychology and ethics. The influence of economists on public opinion has been very much lessened by the enunciation as 'scientific' of

theories based on unproved and often unstated assumptions. Any useful advice by the economist must be based on a realization of the assumptions which are being made about the rules of human behavior and the standards by which the values of different policies are judged. In particular, it must be realized that to assume that the real wants of consumers are expressed by their money preferences is a simplification which may be very inaccurate. It would only be accurate if (1) incomes are such as to give the wants of each individual their correct weighting; (2) there were no difficulties in organizing the demands of large numbers of disconnected individuals or in applying these demands to the correction of differences between individual and social return; (3) the judgments which lead to the expression of consumers' preference were based on the considered judgments of consumers as to what they really wanted. In practice these conditions will not usually be satisfied and social policy must take account of this.

This does not, of course, mean that money demands are not a good measure of real wants over a very wide range. Stalin, in his interview with H. G. Wells, assumed that there was a necessary contradiction between producing what gave the best price and producing what people wanted and that this could only be cured by communism. It would have been interesting if Wells had asked how the development of heavy industry was supposed to have satisfied the wants of those who died in the 1932 famine. Few capitalist states can show such a wide divergence between the distribution of needs and of productive effort. Consumers' money preference might be compared to a magnetic compass which will always need correction to get true North and may be hopelessly wrong in some surroundings but which is, nevertheless, when rightly used, a convenient and accurate instrument.

### III

The problem of making the necessary corrections for the divergence between consumers' preference and real wants is not

one which can be solved with any great exactness. There must be some degree of arbitrariness in any rules by which the rather vague concept of real want is reduced to quantitatively measurable forms. Those who believe with Wittgenstein that "What can be said at all can be said clearly; and whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent," will say that the whole question is one of which no useful discussion is possible. An attempt to answer fully this form of objection would involve philosophical discussion which would be out of place here. It can only be said that this work is based on the assumption that it is better to be vaguely right than clearly wrong, and that in practice useful discussion seems to be possible of questions which cannot be clearly formulated. For example, the discussion of such question as "Is A better at mathematics than B at literature?" is certain to give better results in the awarding of scholarships than reliance on the exact but wrong standard of the amount of bribe offered to the examiners; and it will probably even give better results than intelligence tests.

A full account of the actual measures required to make the necessary corrections would need a great deal of description of actual conditions, so only an outline is given here.

To correct for the inequality of incomes it will be necessary to give extra weight to the demand for the things which the community thinks that all its members should have regardless of their income. This is already done to a large extent through the various social services, free education, housing subsidies, etc. To correct for the demands which cannot produce a direct effect on the market it will be necessary for some organization to supply public works and the other constituents of common enjoyment, and to regulate, possibly by differential taxation, industries in which there is a wide divergence between individual and social return.

Something on these lines is done at present. Public authorities do now consider it their duty to provide such things as parks,

museums and swimming baths, and town planning is an attempt to satisfy the demand for surroundings worth living in. Very little is done, however, to charge industries with their full social costs. In fact some public action makes the position worse. For example, it is probable that London is already more than the optimum size, i.e. further growth produces on balance social disadvantages, but the housing and transport for new industries in outer London is provided partly at the expense of the London County Council and the general taxpayer. There is certainly fairly heavy taxation of road transport but this is done simply to raise money; at least the complaints of over-taxation are not met by stating the case for charging the industry with some amount to represent the costs of the noise, vibration, and danger which it causes but does not pay for.

There is a strong case for a wide extension of town planning and for a consideration of the relative social advantages of different possible distributions and organizations of industry and for action to encourage the development which is most desirable.

The correction for short term choice is rather different from the others. The corrections for inequality of incomes, for demands which cannot be expressed on a free market, and for the difference between individual and social return will always have to be made, and, so long as the organization of society remains unchanged, they will have to be made to approximately the same extent. In many cases, however, the object of correction for short term choice is to reverse a cumulative drift to unconsidered judgments. In so far as the correction is successful it will diminish the need for further correction in the future. The amount of correction required to prevent the starting of a drift to unconsidered judgment among people who are usually capable of thinking out their real wants will be very much less than that required when people have mostly got into a state of muddle and confusion. (The Dutch experiments in dealing with the worst type of slum dweller show that very strong action will often be desirable where the cumulative process caused by poverty and bad conditions has gone far.)

To discuss how much correction would permanently be necessary would involve questions of political philosophy about which widely differing opinions are held. Those who believe in the ultimate perfectability of human nature will regard any correction as an attempt to compensate for some of the bad effects of defective education and environment, and hence as something which, it is hoped, may in time become unnecessary. Those, on the other hand, who look on mankind as permanently divided into leaders and followers will believe that, for the mass of the people, a lot of correction will always be necessary. There is also the problem '*quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*' Inability to take long term decisions is as common in governments as elsewhere, and it may prove hard to find a planning authority which can look much further ahead than those for whom it plans. Lord Cecil in a lecture on "The Machinery of Government" said, "A few years ago a friend of mine used to refer to what he called 'the Prime Minister's disease' by which he meant an instinctive refusal to decide anything if decision could by any means be avoided." This is just the state which correction for short term choice should try to cure. The various dictators have more in the way of long term policies, but, or perhaps because, they are not concerned as to whether these policies are what people want or even if they are internally consistent.

#### IV

However, without plunging into these obscure and uncertain speculations, it is possible to point out a few of the cases where it is extremely probable that there is at present a wide divergence between long and short term choice and where action to correct it is possible.

The provision of compulsory education and of various health and unemployment insurance services may be defended on these grounds. When left to themselves many people will tend to undervalue the education of their children as compared with the chance

of an immediate job and to take a risk in not accumulating a reserve for illness or unemployment. It seems probable that there will continue to be a need for such corrections to be made; though it is possible that as people come to realize the importance of good health, voluntary associations such as the Pioneer Health Centre in London might prove more efficient than a state service.

The high taxation of alcohol may be defended as preventing a process of cumulative drift and it has to a large extent been successful. Peoples' habits have apparently become more sober; and even if the taxation were lowered, it is probable that consumption would remain lower than in former times. Money lending provides another example. There are many examples in countries such as India of communities where indebtedness to money lenders has become a permanent condition. Legal action has been taken in many countries to prevent the enforcement of contracts where it is very probable that one party was acting under the influence of very short term choice.

On the analogy of money lending, restrictions might well be placed on hire-purchase transactions. Their superficial attractions often lead people into making contracts which they very much regret afterwards. District organizers of the National Council for Social Service have said that hire-purchase transactions caused more misery than almost anything else among the working class population, especially in new housing estates.

There would also be a strong case for the restriction of the more unpleasant forms of mass production. It would be very hard to estimate the real disadvantages of different forms of work, but an unemployment insurance system might differentiate heavily against firms with a high labor turnover. (At present in England it actually subsidizes the firm which works with a very big reserve of labor.)

The restriction of advertisement would also be beneficial. Most advertisement does not attempt to influence long term choice by providing information on which reasoned choice could be based.

On the contrary it tries to extend short term choice by playing on prejudices and fears and creating irrational associations. In many cases, such as patent medicines, it directly interferes with rational choice by untrue statements. The lessening of advertisement would help to prevent the cumulative drift to conspicuous waste as a motive for expenditure. It is apparently possible to influence through advertisement not only the choice among the varieties of a particular commodity but also the distribution of income among different commodities, for example, by directing expenditure towards tobacco or towards milk. Widespread advertising will therefore tend to divert demand towards material commodities and away from leisure and conditions of work; that is, unless some group undertook advertising on behalf of the latter. There might be, for example, a picture of a husband suggesting to his wife that they should get a new car like the Jones' and the wife saying that she much prefers to have him as he is and not always in a bad temper through overwork like Mr. Jones. Such action is, however, improbable, and the restriction of advertisement which would be equally effective would have advantages in preventing the wide divergence between individual and social returns which competitive advertisement shows.

This is only a very brief sketch of the way in which planning, in the sense of interference with a system of free markets, is necessary to satisfy the real wants of the consumer. It could be very much extended, but this would require a lot of description of organization which would be out of place in a work which is meant to be theoretical.

*M. F. M. Lindsay*

Lindsay, M. F.M. "Consumers' Preference and Planning." *Yenching Journal of Social Studies*, vol. I, no. 2, 1939, p. 192+. China from Empire to Republic, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/67e425>. Accessed 11 Mar. 2018.

## Tso Tsung-t'ang: The Farmer of Hsiangshang

The full significance of the life and works of Tso Tsung-t'ang cannot be adequately understood without an appreciation of his activities before the Emperor summoned him in 1860 to assist Tseng Kuo-fan 曾國藩 in the military operations against the Taipings. A complete biography of this leader should cover three distinct phases, agricultural, military, and political; for Tso spent the first forty-two years of his life (Chinese counting) as a school master and gentleman farmer before going to Hunan as a minor official from 1852 to 1860. During the next twenty-five years he was an Imperial appointee enjoying a rapid rise to power and high position. Unfortunately Tso Tsung-t'ang's military grandeur and political achievements have overshadowed his humbler, yet more fundamental, work in agricultural reform. Not only were his early and formative years spent in rural work, but throughout his life he continued to carry out a program of agricultural reform wherever he went.

In history and personal recollection Tso is generally known as "the great viceroy", "the scholar-general", "the conqueror of Sinkiang", "the reforming statesman", or by other such appellations, but never as an economic reformer or an agriculturalist. There was only one man who ever called him "the farmer", and that was Tso himself. In his early days he referred to himself as "the farmer of Hsiangshang" 湘上農人, and even after achieving fame as a viceroy he continued to sign letters home with the same

name.<sup>1</sup> In Tso Tsung-t'ang's official correspondence sentences such as "I am an old farmer" and "I came from the farm" are often found.<sup>2</sup> On several occasions Tso stated to the Emperor that he was of poor and humble origin, his ancestors having been scholar-farmers for several hundred years, and that he himself had been on the farm in his early days and was familiar with both northern and southern methods of farming.<sup>3</sup> And toward the end of his life he instructed his children to devote their lives to agriculture and study in order to maintain the family tradition.<sup>4</sup> From this it appears that Tso Tsung-t'ang was more truly the farmer than the English king who signed himself "George, the farmer".

There are two definite reasons why Tso turned to agriculture for a life work: one was the family tradition and the other was personal. His father was a poor country school-teacher with a little ancestral farm, too small to support the family. Young Tso grew up with a thorough knowledge of farming and animal husbandry,<sup>5</sup> and during his teens he paid great attention to books of a practical nature.<sup>6</sup> Such was the family influence on his life.

Of still stronger effect was the personal decision he made in 1838 at the age of twenty-seven. In that year Tso failed for the third time to pass the national examinations held in Peking. He was so disappointed over his own failure that he gave up all hope of an official career and determined not to attempt the examina-

<sup>1</sup> *Tso Wen-hsiang Kung Ch'üan Chi* 左文襄公全集 (Complete Works of Tso Tsung-t'ang); *Tso Wen-hsiang Kung Nien P'u* 左文襄公年譜. (The Annals of Tso Tsung-t'ang, Changsha, 1890, chüan 1, p. 1a; *Tso Wen-hsiang Kung Chia Shu* 左文襄公家書 (Home Letters), Shanghai, 1920. Hsiangshang 湘上 is a rural town in Hunan where Tso lived for several years.

<sup>2</sup> *Shu Tu* 書牘 (Letters), chüan 14, p. 13b; chüan 19, p. 61b; chüan 25, p. 37b.

<sup>3</sup> *Tsou Kao* 奏稿 (Memorials), chüan 11, p. 51a; chüan 50, p. 28a; chüan 59, p. 63.

<sup>4</sup> *Nien P'u* 年譜 (The Annals), chüan 9, p. 36b-37a.

<sup>5</sup> See *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao Pa Chou Yin K'un So Ts'ang Tso Wen-hsiang Shu Tu* 梁啟超跋周印昆所藏左文襄書牘. (Postface to the Collection of Tso Tsung-t'ang's letters to the Chou Family). These are Tso's letters to his brother-in-law and mother-in-law in his early years, as yet unpublished. Liang's postface is in *Yin Ping Shih Ch'üan Chi* 飲冰室全集, Shanghai, 1916, ch'e 23, p. 25b-26a.

<sup>6</sup> *Nien P'u*, chüan 1, p. 7.

tions again. From that time on Tso Tsung-t'ang set his mind on practical affairs, living in the country for the next ten years. It was during this period of seclusion that he became an agriculturalist, devoting his greatest efforts to the study of ancient books on agriculture, with particular attention to the method of *ch'ü t'ien* 區田 (rotation of land for the purpose of conserving moisture). Recalling experiences of these years, Tso wrote to a friend in 1877 saying, "When I returned in 1838 after having failed in the national examination, I made up my mind to be a farmer for the rest of my life. I, therefore, devoted all my efforts to the study of agricultural books, and I am proud of my own accomplishment in the knowledge of agriculture, especially the method of *ch'ü t'ien* in which I had particular experience."<sup>7</sup>

### I. AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT AT HOME

This long period of seclusion from the age of twenty-seven to forty-two was the fountainhead of Tso Tsung-t'ang's successful career during the last twenty years of his life. This quiet period allowed him to concentrate his vigorous mind and body on practical matters such as national geography, economic reform, village and national defense, relief work, and education, in addition to agriculture. All of this knowledge later on proved to be extremely valuable when he was called to serve the nation. His little native village in Hunan was really a rural experimental center; the technique developed and the experience gained there were later applied to the various provinces in which Tso Tsung-t'ang served as viceroy.

His first farm was located at Hsiangt'an 湘潭 near his mother-in-law's home. (Tso was too poor to have his own home and was forced to live in his wife's house for nine years.) On his five *mu* of land he had a thousand mulberry trees, and he asked his family to raise silkworms for the production of silk.<sup>8</sup> During

<sup>7</sup> *Shu Tu*, chüan 19, p. 16b.

<sup>8</sup> *Nien P'u*, chüan 1, p. 17b.

this period he also served as a rural school-teacher and in 1843 purchased seventy *mu* of land with his earnings and tuition fees of the preceding years. In the following year he moved his family to the new home and named the country house "Willow Villa" 柳莊. It is recorded that Tso Tsung-t'ang applied what he learned from books to actual farming, going to the fields everyday to supervise the farm laborers and styling himself "the farmer of Hsiangshang."<sup>9</sup>

Tso was the first farmer to introduce tea trees to the district of Hsiangyin 湘陰. Following the successful experiment on his farm the use of this plant spread throughout that region. Tso cultivated his farm by applying ancient agricultural methods modified to suit the local conditions. His attitude toward agriculture and his interest in other aspects of rural economics and village organization is best revealed in a letter he wrote to his former teacher. "I have gone quite far into rural affairs, both in theoretical knowledge and in practical experience. The present day farmer, very much like the modern scholar, is superficial and expects results quickly. He not only betrays himself but also misleads others.... The building of walls, constructing of earthworks, erecting of block houses, are all, like farming and animal husbandry, necessary arts for living in the country, and I have mastered each of them." To him agriculture seemed the most dignified, most upright and most reliable profession, and it grieved him that people often neglected it.<sup>10</sup>

In 1848 Hunan suffered a severe flood following a period of drought. Tso Tsung-t'ang's rice farms were destroyed and all the members of his family became ill. Every article of value had to be sent to the pawnshop. But in spite of this physical suffering and poverty, Tso organized relief work in the province and was able to raise about half a million taels in cash and kind for the purpose. He also established a number of granaries as a means

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21b-22a.

<sup>10</sup> *Shu Tu*, chüan 1, p. 40.

of famine relief. Another flood occurred in the following year, and Tso's family distributed rice and medicine to the refugees.<sup>11</sup> These experiences in relief work proved invaluable to Tso when later on he had to organize relief on a larger scale among war refugees in the provinces devastated by the Taipings and in the famine districts of the Northwest.

From 1843 until 1852 Tso Tsung-t'ang lived in Hsiangshang without interruption and enjoyed life as a gentleman farmer. He completed a book on agriculture in 1845. In the fall of 1852 Tso entered the government service, and in 1857 his family moved to a house purchased for him by his superiors in Changsha 長沙, where they continued the agricultural tradition by raising fish and cultivating vegetables.<sup>12</sup>

## II. RURAL RECONSTRUCTION IN THE PROVINCES

No matter what position he occupied, whether viceroy or chief commander, everywhere Tso Tsung-t'ang went he looked after the interests of his fellow farmers. One method he used to this end was that of enlisting only farmers in his army, all other classes of persons being excluded. Even the officers in his army were all experienced farmers.<sup>13</sup> Being agricultural workers themselves, the soldiers were able to understand and assist in solving the problems of the country people. Another method lay in his policy of rural reconstruction which always included irrigation, the planting of mulberry trees to raise silk worms, and the cultivation of cotton. He believed this program would supply both food stuffs and clothing for the people. Together with education he recommended this policy for Chekiang and Fukien when he was viceroy of those provinces from 1863 to 1866.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *Nien P'u*, chüan 1, p. 23b-24a; *Shu Tu*, chüan 19, p. 43b.

<sup>12</sup> *Nien P'u*, chüan 2, p. 23b; *Shu Tu*, chüan 22, p. 1a.

<sup>13</sup> *Tsou Kao*, chüan 50, p. 29a.

<sup>14</sup> *Shu Tu*, chüan 8, p. 50b; *Tsou Kao*, chüan 11, p. 63b.

Coming back from the Northwest in 1880, Tso was surprised at the neglect of irrigation on the part of the authorities of Chihli Province. After obtaining Imperial sanction and the consent of Li Hung-chang who was then viceroy of Chihli, Tso undertook the task of river conservancy with his farmer army.<sup>15</sup> When he became viceroy of Liang Kiang 兩江 in 1882, he mapped out a comprehensive program for improving the rivers in those provinces, including canals and the control of the Huai River.<sup>16</sup> This plan was only partly fulfilled as Tso was soon summoned to the Peking Court.<sup>17</sup>

The most significant and lasting contribution of Tso Tsung-t'ang in this line, however, was in the Northwest where he stayed for twelve years from 1868 to 1880, long enough to allow his ideas for rural reconstruction to be put into effect. The central idea of Tso's scheme was temporary military land colonization, but the maintenance of food supplies for an army of one hundred and twenty regiments, totaling about 60,000 men, on a march as far as Sinkiang constituted a serious problem. Some system of local supplies in addition to what could be obtained from local authorities and Russia was absolutely necessary. In his study of Chinese military history Tso discovered the precedent for this method of temporary military colonization,<sup>18</sup> and the fact that his army was composed of farmers made its execution much simpler.

The danger of such military colonization is that the army consumes all available food at the expense of the people. To prevent such disastrous consequences Tso strongly urged the necessity of supplementing the military with civilian colonization.<sup>19</sup> Many places in Kansu and Sinkiang were suitable for rice

<sup>15</sup> *Shu Tu*, chüan 25, p. 6b, 8, 20b, 23b, 28-39, *Tsou Kao*, chüan 58, p. 5-6, 12a, 18-38.

<sup>16</sup> *Tsou Kao*, chüan 59, p. 3-5, 63, 69; chüan 60, p. 12a, 18; chüan 61, p. 58; chüan 62, p. 18. *Shu Tu*, chüan 25, p. 53b-54, 57a.

<sup>17</sup> Tso Tsung-t'ang's idea of conducting the Huai 淮 into the sea was successfully carried out a few years ago by the provincial authorities of Kiangsu Province, after a lapse of over fifty years.

<sup>18</sup> *Tsou Kao*, chüan 21, p. 21a.

<sup>19</sup> *Shu Tu*, chüan 14, p. 6b-7; *Tsou Kao*, chüan 45, p. 77-79.

and wheat, and as the result of this colonization, over 60,000 *mu* of land in the latter province alone were cultivated.<sup>20</sup> This reclamation of land not only insured local supplies of grain to some small extent, but it also provided a source of revenue to the government. At first one-eleventh was taxed, and this was soon increased to one-tenth. From the autumn of 1878 to the summer of 1879 the income from this tax amounted to about one hundred and eighty thousand taels.<sup>21</sup>

Irrigation is the key to agriculture in the Northwest and was especially important for the newly cultivated land. Therefore Tso Tsung-t'ang paid a great deal of attention to this division of the work, adopting a three-fold policy of digging wells, dredging rivers and canals, and rotation of land for the purpose of conserving moisture. Tso felt the last two methods should always supplement each other.<sup>22</sup> Modern machinery, worked by German experts, was also introduced for irrigation purposes.<sup>23</sup>

Closely connected with irrigation was Tso's successful attempt at reforestation. This was carried out over a considerable area in the Northwest. More than half a million trees were planted in Shensi and Kansu. Along the road from Ch'angwu Hsien 長武縣 to Huining Hsien 會寧縣 in Shensi, a distance of six hundred *li*, some two hundred and sixty-four thousand trees were planted.<sup>24</sup> These trees are still growing today and are known locally as *Tso Kung liu* 左公柳 (the willow trees of Count Tso). They not only contributed to the impressive scenery of the Northwest, arousing to this day the admiration of travellers, but also aided the economic welfare of the people in that section of the country.

In addition to agriculture and forestry, Tso Tsung-t'ang introduced into the Northwest the silk industry of the Southeast.

<sup>20</sup> *Tsou Kao*, chüan 56, p. 20b.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, chüan 56, p. 22b.

<sup>22</sup> *Shu Tu*, chüan 19, pp. 61 and 64a.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, chüan 22, p. 36b; also *The Celestial Empire*, Shanghai, v. 17, Jan, 3, 1881, p. 548, and *Mesny's Chinese Miscellany*, v. 4, no. 1, Jan. 1, 1905.

<sup>24</sup> *Tsou Kao*, chüan 56, p. 26-27, gives the distribution of trees in the various *hsien*.

Mulberry trees were planted in Shansi, Kansu, and Sinkiang. On the hilly slopes and the plains of southern Sinkiang alone more than eight hundred thousand were set out. Besides silkworms and industrial equipment for the manufacture of the goods, sixty silk experts were brought from Huchow 湖州, the famous silk center in Chekiang, to teach the silk trade to the farmers of the Northwest. Lanchow 蘭州 was used as the headquarters for five other centers. The new industry, which produced silk as good as that made in Szechuan, was intended for the export trade into Russia.<sup>25</sup>

Another village industry which received Tso's attention was cotton manufacture. The climate and soil in Kansu and Shensi were favorable for the growth of this product, and the farmers were urged to plant cotton instead of opium poppies. A printed leaflet on the ten essentials for the cultivation of cotton and a book on the same subject were widely circulated. Demonstration centers and cotton manufacture bureaus were established. It was hoped that this industry would develop sufficiently to provide the poor peasantry of the Northwest with warm material for their padded clothing.<sup>26</sup>

As the Northwest is particularly well suited for animal husbandry, the early training of the reforming viceroy was utilized in developing this program. He personally contributed two thousand taels for the purchase of sheep which were to be distributed among the villagers in Kansu in the hope that this phase of animal husbandry might be prosperously developed.<sup>27</sup>

Of all Tso Tsung-t'ang's efforts at reform, the most ambitious was his attempt to transform the village handicraft woollen industry into a modern machine industry. Elsewhere there is an account of this wonderful experiment.<sup>28</sup> Here it suffices to say

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, chüan 45, p. 21-22.

<sup>27</sup> *Shu Tu*, chüan 24, p. 32a.

<sup>28</sup> Gideon Chen, *Modern Industrial Technique in China*, Part III: *Tso Tsung-t'ang, Pioneer Promoter of the Modern Dockyard and the Woollen Mill in China*.

that a successful beginning of the first modern textile industry in China was made at Lanchow in 1879-1883 with German machines and German experts. It is interesting to note that the fear of throwing the village craftsmen out of work never occurred to Tso as a possible consequence of the introduction of a modern industrial factory, and the short duration of the mill made it impossible for such a reaction to develop on a large scale.

On his way back from Sinking to Peking in 1881, after all these reforms had been under way for a decade, the viceroy saw the results of his handiwork. Of this transformation he himself wrote as follows: "When I first came to Kansu I felt that military colonization was the first policy to be put into effect. Everywhere my army passed I observed the natural environment and encamped at the strategic points. Whenever there was a recess in the fighting, my soldiers laid down their weapons and took up ploughs and other agricultural instruments to cultivate land, plant trees, and grow vegetables. When they were free from farming, they devoted their leisure time to digging wells and canals, building dykes, improving irrigation, constructing block houses, and distributing seeds and agricultural tools among the poor peasants. Along the sides of the road trees were planted for the benefit of travellers.... After a lapse of eight or nine years the refugees returned and traders have recovered their businesses. All the land cultivated by my soldiers was given to the farmers.... From Chingchow 涇州 to Chiayü 嘉峪, alongside the main road and throughout the country surrounding every *t'ing* 廳, *chow* 州, and *hsien* 縣, peace and order have been restored and the population prospers, although the interior villages have not yet completely recovered...."<sup>29</sup>

The improved conditions in other sections of the country were described in a similar manner: "This time I came from Hami 哈密 [Sinkiang] to Lanchow.... What I saw on the way testi-

<sup>29</sup> *Tsou Kao*, chüan 50, p. 28a.

fied to the prosperity of the people and contrasted greatly with the condition of the country five years ago. As a consequence of the increase in cultivated land, the food supplies have become abundant. One catty of white flour costs only ten cents, and the prices of coarse grains are now lower. The granaries are full of produce. Since the prohibition of poppy growing, the less fertile land has been planted with cotton. Those who were formerly under-clothed now no longer suffer from the cold. Recently the Chekiang mulberry trees have been widely introduced. Silk reeling and weaving centers have been established in Sinkiang, Kansu and Shensi. Mulberry leaves and cocoons are purchased so that even those who do not know how to raise silkworms or to reel silk will also receive benefits. The woolen mill constructed at Lanchow is on a grand scale with twenty looms, though only half of these are now working. The quality of the cloth turned out there has gradually improved. The foreign and Chinese masters and the native apprentices are working diligently and with good results.

“On the way I saw that the canals and wells were in satisfactory condition, forming a good system of irrigation. The willow and other trees which had been planted along the road have been grown into small woods. From Chiayü to Lanchow, with the exception of bits of poor and sandy land, large-sized trees are continuously seen. The sound of pupils reading their lessons can be heard when one passes by the schools. The people are enjoying their lives in peace and prosperity. This was not so before.”<sup>30</sup>

The section east of Lanchow was mentioned as follows: “From Lanchow to Sian the city walls have been repaired and block houses have been built, new roads made, bridges constructed, canals dug, trees planted. All these projects are conducive to the welfare of the people. At present the upper courses of the Ching River 經水 are being worked by Western machines for the purpose of flooding the canals, directing water to the reservoirs and irrigating the

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, chüan 57, p. 47.

farms. It is hoped that a permanent blessing to the people can be insured."<sup>31</sup>

All of these statements indicate the great joy which Tso Tsung-t'ang, the farmer of Hsiangshang, and his Hunan farmers' army must have experienced in witnessing the great benefits which they had been able to render their fellow farmers in the Northwest.

### III. ECONOMIC REFORMS AND ECONOMIC POLICIES

Following the same line of thought, Tso Tsung-t'ang's other economic activities can also be analyzed from the standpoint of a farmer's psychology. Despite an imperfect understanding of the West, Tso was always ready to promote foreign trade. Whenever he was asked by the Emperor to express an opinion on foreign relations and foreign enterprises in China, he would always advocate foreign trade in itself, though occasionally disapproving of individual proposals.<sup>32</sup> The principle of mutual benefit in international trade had been thoroughly grasped by the farmer statesman.<sup>33</sup> While in Sinkiang he had used every possible means to encourage Sino-Russian economic intercourse. In supplying his army he had occasionally turned to Russia for wheat and to Japan for rice.<sup>34</sup> Some misunderstanding has arisen over this advocacy of trade by persons who forget that in his early years Tso had seen the benefits the farmer derived from trade and that he merely applied this truth to relations between states. This was a point which Chinese scholars and officials might miss, but not the practical farmer.

When in need, a farmer would raise money by hook or by crook, without paying too much attention to its source. It is not

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, chüan 57, p. 57.

<sup>32</sup> *Shu Tu*, chüan 15, p. 40b; chüan 18, p. 30-32, 35, 50-54; chüan 22, p. 29; *Tsou Kao*, chüan 46, p. 41.

<sup>33</sup> *Shu Tu*, chüan 22, p. 33b.

<sup>34</sup> *Tsou Kao*, chüan 52, p. 73b; *Shu Tu*, chüan 17, p. 5b.

surprising that Tso Tsung-t'ang should advocate borrowing from foreign sources, in matters of public finance. He was probably the first Chinese statesman to do this. In 1865 when he was viceroy of Fukien and Chekiang, he contracted a loan of 360,000 taels from foreign merchants in Foochow for carrying out his military program.<sup>35</sup> This appears to have been the first foreign loan in China.<sup>36</sup> In 1867 it was proposed to float another foreign loan of 2,000,000 taels from foreign firms in Shanghai for military expenses in Kansu and Shensi.<sup>37</sup> The Throne approved this proposal to the amount of only, 1,000,000 taels.<sup>38</sup> A third foreign loan of 3,000,000 taels was obtained in 1875.<sup>39</sup> The following year Tso suggested to the Throne that a fourth loan of 10,000,000 taels be contracted, but only half this amount was sanctioned. Negotiations for this loan were not completed until 1877.

All of these loans were issued on the security of the customs revenues in the different ports. The foreign firms participating in the credits were Jardine, Matheson and Company, the Oriental Banking Corporation, Telge and Company, and the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation. The usual rates of interest ranged from 10 to 15% per annum. Twice the Imperial decrees registered disapproval of the high rates of interest which had to be paid on foreign loans.<sup>40</sup> Two reasons may be advanced to explain why Tso Tsung-t'ang held firm in face of such high rates. On the one hand he was very hard pressed to meet expenses in the Northwest due to the failure of the various provincial governments to contribute their share of the military campaign. Further, Tso had grown so accustomed in his early years to the usury of the villages that he did not feel uncomfortable about the foreign loans. Even today the annual rate of 10% would be considered

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, chüan 14, p. 42.

<sup>36</sup> For a discussion of this, see *The Yenching Journal of Social Studies*, v. 1, no. 1, p. 128-134.

<sup>37</sup> *Tsou Kao*, chüan 21, p. 64.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, chüan 24, p. 41.

<sup>39</sup> *Shu Tu*, chüan 15, p. 10a; *Tsou Kao*, chüan 46, p. 55.

<sup>40</sup> *Tsou Kao*, chüan 24, p. 41; chüan 51, p. 10-11.

as low interest in a Chinese town, and a yearly rate of 30% or more is still not uncommon in the villages although government laws fix 20% as the maximum interest rate to be charged per year.

Mention should also be made of Tso's attempt in 1878 to establish a modern bank patterned after Western institutions. His agent in Shanghai, Hu Kuang-yung 胡光墉, was instructed to organize such a modern bank, following the practice of the foreign joint stock company. Ch'ien T'ai Kung Ssu 乾泰公司 was chosen as the name for the new bank. Chinese merchants were solicited to subscribe to the capital at 5,000 taels a share. The total promises amounted to 1,750,000 taels, and the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation subscribed an equal amount, having previously promised not to call this investment a foreign loan. The interest rate charged was 15%.<sup>41</sup> Further details of this bank are not known. It resembled the type of joint company found in Europe during the early period of capitalism. The Ch'en T'ai Kung Ssu of 1878 can be regarded as the forerunner of modern banks in China.<sup>42</sup> It was not an attempt to secure foreign loans on more favorable terms, but rather an effort by a country gentleman to ensure the benefits of loan-making to his fellow countrymen rather than to foreigners.

During his years as a viceroy Tso Tsung-t'ang also turned his hand to many forms of relief work. These included his compelling pawn shops to lower their interest rates, the setting up of soup kitchens, the prohibiting of opium smoking, and other forms of immediate relief in distressed areas. Many of these methods can be attributed to his experiences in early days as a gentleman farmer in Hunan, where he had been in direct contact with the people.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, chüan 53, p. 20-21; *Shu Tu*, chüan 19, p. 72b; chüan 20, p. 52-53.

<sup>42</sup> Later on Hu Kuang-yung returned to the old practice and established a private bank modelled after the famous Shansi pattern. See Gideon Ch'en, *Shansi P'iao Chuang K'ao Lüeh* 陳其田山西票莊攷略 (*History of the Shansi Banks*), Shanghai, 1937, p. 77-78, 149.

Tso's method of relief can best be illustrated by his work in Chekiang in 1862. To cope with the devastation caused by the Taiping wars he issued twelve regulations governing relief and reconstruction, including the free distribution of seeds and the lending of cows for ploughing purposes. In the spring his soldiers were instructed to assist the people in the cultivation of their land; and when the troops moved on, expressions of deep appreciation for the assistance rendered were voiced by the people of that region.<sup>43</sup>

A more striking story in connection with relief was told by one of Tso's subordinates. It was said that Tso Tsung-t'ang used 20,000 taels to purchase tea and bamboo trees which were planted on hilly slopes and in deserted valleys so that the poor people could freely gather tea leaves and bamboo shoots. He organized a marketing system by which these products were sent to Ningpo for sale. After paying back the capital and giving the people what was due them, there remained a balance of several thousand taels which Tso devoted to reprinting the Chinese classics, presumably for free distribution.<sup>44</sup>

Again one must turn to the farmer's psychology of this reforming statesman to explain his lack of interest in railways and telegraphs.<sup>45</sup> A sense of time, as a rule, is not developed in a backward agricultural society, but the problem of speed is the great concern of modern industrial life. Tso Tsung-t'ang, with his rural background and training, did not appreciate the speed of railways and telegraphs. His enthusiasm for the promotion of armed steamers at Foochow resulted primarily from a desire for national defense and not from an interest in communications. Such a patriotic leader would naturally use all possible means for furthering national defense, a characteristic Tso revealed in his

<sup>43</sup> *Tsou Kao*, chüan 4, p. 31.

<sup>44</sup> *Nien P'u*, chüan 3, p. 22; Ch'en Ch'i-yüan, *Yung Hsien Chai Pi Chi* 陳其元庸閑齋筆記 (Sketch Book), (preface dated 1875; reprinted Shanghai, 1929), chüan 8, p. 7.

<sup>45</sup> Gideon Ch'en, *Tso Tsung-t'ang*, p. 80.

campaigns against bandits and the Taipings; but he was unable to see what could be gained from faster means of communication across the country.

To say in conclusion that Viceroy Tso Tsung-t'ang's real self was never far from the soil suggests an interesting parallel with Bismarck, his Western contemporary. Both were reared amid rural life; neither entered public service in an official capacity until he was middle-aged. Both reached positions of great national responsibility; neither could forget his agricultural heritage. One remained to the end of his career "the farmer of Hsiangshang"; the other was proud to be "the Prussian Junker".

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Ch'en, Gideon. "Tso Tsung—t'ang: the Farmer of Hsiangshang." *Yenching Journal of Social Studies*, vol. I, no. 2, 1939, p. 211+. China from Empire to Republic, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/67e4F2>. Accessed 11 Mar. 2018.

# Marcel Granet: An Appreciation.

## 1. An Introduction to Granet's Sinology

We know that sinology, in the eyes of Occidentals, is an Occidental science and, above all, essentially a French science. Twenty years ago Chavannes said: "If sinology is, in its origins, a science inaugurated by French missionaries and established by men such as Abel Rémusat and Stanislas Julien, it now includes on its roll French sinologues who are worthy of their illustrious predecessors."<sup>1</sup> During the last twenty years Occidental sinology has remained a French science, since authorities such as Paul Pelliot (1878-19—), Henri Maspero (1883-19—) and Bernhard Karlgren (1889-19—)<sup>2</sup> all belong to the French school.

Professor Granet<sup>3</sup> also belongs to that school. He began to make himself known in 1912<sup>4</sup>, and he has been famous for the last seven or eight years. He has been able to open a new road to sinology, and represents a school which marks an important date in the historiography of Chinese civilization.

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<sup>1</sup> Edouard Chavannes, "La Sinologie", *La Science Française*, 1915. In order to complete this historical note on French sinology, written by Chavannes in 1915, it is necessary to refer to Henri Maspero, "La Sinologie", *Société Asiatique, Le Livre du Centenaire, 1822-1922*, ch. 11; Henri Maspero, "Chine et Asie Centrale", *Histoire et Historiens depuis Cinquante Ans*, 1928, v. 2; Granet, "La Civilisation Chinoise", *Annales de l'Université de Paris*, 1928; Demiéville, "La Sinologie", *La Science Française*, 2nd ed., 1934, v. 2. One should also consult: *Journal Asiatique*, 1822, et seq.; *T'oung Pao*, 1890, et seq.; *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient*, 1900, et seq.;

<sup>2</sup> Bernhard Karlgren, a Swedish sinologue and an eminent philologist, is also a disciple of Chavannes.

<sup>3</sup> Marcel Granet was born at Luc-en Diois (Drôme) on February 29, 1884. He entered the Ecole Normale Supérieure in 1904, and graduated as *agrégé d'histoire* in 1907. He received a scholarship from the Thiers Foundation, 1908 to 1911. He was doing research work in China from 1911 to 1913. He has been the Director of Studies on Religions of the Far East in the section of religious science at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes in Paris since 1913, as the successor to Edouard Chavannes. He received the degree of *Docteur ès Lettres* in 1920. Since 1925, he has been concurrently Professor of Geography, History and Institutions of the Far East at the National School of Oriental Living Languages. He is also one of the founders of the Institut des Hautes Etudes Chinoises. Ever since the establishment of this institute in 1926, he has been its Administrator, and Professor of Chinese Civilization. For his works, see the bibliographical list at the end of this article.

<sup>4</sup> Marcel Granet, "Coutumes Matrimoniales de la Chine Antique", *T'oung Pao*, v. 13, 1912, p. 517-558.

Strange to say none of his works has as yet been translated into Chinese, and our Chinese scholars appear to be unaware or to think little of his contributions to sinology. It has been only in the last four or five years that some of his works have been translated into English and that his name began to be known in our country. Unfortunately, Granet has no personal connections with our Chinese scholars. His method of work differs entirely from that of Chinese sinologues of the old type and of the new. More unfortunately still, hardly was his name known in China, when Granet found a redoubtable foe in Dr. V. K. Ting, who, without much delicacy, loosed upon his work and upon his person damaging sarcasm.<sup>5</sup> Ever since, Granet has not been spoken of without jibes which doubtless arose from a lack of understanding. Consequently, no one endeavors to find whether Granet has really brought anything new to sinology. This misunderstanding, regrettable no doubt for Granet, is, to my mind, still more regrettable for our national scholarship.

Personally, I have been a pupil of Granet, and he has given me most useful advice. I will not undertake his defense here; his own works can do it better than I. However, I should like to suggest to my readers that before criticizing an author, one should try to understand him. Did Dr. V. K. Ting know the French language thoroughly? I do not know; but admitting that he knew it perfectly, it might still be possible that he could not understand Granet's scholarship. For these two minds, equally searching though they are, are antithetical; the one, a scientist's mind profoundly influenced by Huxley's rationalism,<sup>6</sup> the other, a mythologist's mind deeply imbued with the sociology of Marcel Mauss. It is possible for a man who is distinguished in one sphere not to understand one who is distinguished in another. V. K. Ting did not understand Granet just as Goethe did not understand Beethoven, and yet each of them was a genius in his own realm.

On the first page of his first book, *Fêtes et Chansons Anciennes de la Chine* (1919), Granet inscribed the words: "To the memory of Emile Durkheim and Edouard Chavannes". Later, in 1926, he dedicated his fundamental work, *Danses et Légendes de la Chine Ancienne*, "To Marcel Mauss", and he expressly added in his introduction: "My first wish is that my readers may feel that I have been the pupil of Chavannes and of Durkheim. . . . I have received, although I may not have merited it, the best recompense that I could hope for. Through the friendship of M. Mauss I have been allowed to

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<sup>5</sup> The criticism by V. K. Ting is printed in *The Chinese Social and Political Science Review*, v. 15, no. 2, 1931, p. 265-290.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Fu Ssu-nien 傅斯年 or 傅孟真, "Wo so jen shih ti Ting Wen-chiang hsien sheng" 我所認識的丁文江先生 ("V. K. Ting as I Knew Him"), *Tu Li P'ing Lun* 獨立評論 (*Independent Review*), no. 188 (a special number in memory of V. K. Ting), Feb. 16, 1936, p. 7-8. V. K. Ting is one of the rare scientists of our country. He is not only a geologist and geographer but also a thinker. His contributions to Chinese ethnology are very important. Unfortunately his works along this line had not been completed when he died. After his death the National Research Institute of History and Philosophy of the Academia Sinica edited his *Ts'uan wen ts'ung k'an chia pien* 纂文叢刊, 甲編 (*Documents Concerning the Lolos*), 1936; but no one has yet made a systematic study of his ethnological work.

place his name on the first page of my book.”<sup>7</sup> This shows that there exists between Granet, Chavannes, Durkheim and Mauss an affinity of thought which we must understand if we wish to understand Granet himself.

I shall not attempt here to speak of the life and achievements of Edouard Chavannes (1865-1918); sinologues of all countries know them well. Chavannes' influence on Granet, it seems to me, may be summed up in three points. First, Chavannes' conception of sinology differs from that of his Western predecessors who, following the way traced by our Chinese historians, treated sinology as pure erudition; while Chavannes widened its field enormously and took as the object of his studies the totality of Chinese civilization. Archeology, epigraphy, ethnology, and folklore are all included in his study as well as sinology proper. Secondly, Chavannes is not only a sinologist but also an historian of rare ability. It is only after him that Western sinologues have known how to apply historical method to sinology and thus freed themselves from the traditional thought of China. Thirdly, Chavannes discovered, through his study of the *Sih-chi* 史記, that religion had played a preponderant part in the civilization of ancient China; no one before him had seen it so clearly.

From Chavannes to Granet sinology has made further progress: First, Granet's sinology has for its object not a description but a sociological analysis of Chinese civilization. Secondly, Granet has welded into a single double-edged weapon Chavannes' historical method and the analytical method of the French sociological school. This is one of Granet's most important contributions to present-day sinology. Thirdly, Granet has discovered new facts, all of which supply data on religion in ancient China. These form the subject matter of all his writing.

I should like to emphasize this last, for in all his work Granet starts from the mythologist's point of view. The significance of his contribution is precisely that indicated in the first sentence of *Fêtes et Chansons Anciennes de la Chine*: “I wish to show that it is not impossible to know something of China's *antiquités religieuses*.”<sup>8</sup> We must adopt his point of view if we wish to understand his work. In this matter the influence of Chavannes was not solely responsible, for Granet himself is a born mythologist; and he has been more influenced by the French sociological school, chiefly by Mauss, than he was by Chavannes. In addition, the question of environment should not be neglected, for Granet is the Director of Studies for Far Eastern Religions in l'Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, and all his works have been conceived and nourished there. Nevertheless, all this does not mean that the influence of Chavannes was the least important. Chavannes has been to Granet a light, a guide showing him the direction to be followed. Granet calls Chavannes' *Dieu du Sol* “A model of exact erudition and of historical pre-

<sup>7</sup> Marcel Granet, *Danses et Légendes de la Chine Ancienne* 1926, (referred to hereafter as *DL*), p. 56.

<sup>8</sup> The italics are the author's.

cision."<sup>9</sup> This indicates an undeniable influence but Durkheim has exerted a still more considerable influence on the formation of Granet's mind.

It is generally known that Emil Durkheim (1858-1917) is the founder of the French sociological school and one of the most famous sociologists in the world. His name is mentioned in all text books of sociology; it is, therefore, unnecessary to say more about him. And yet we should like to call attention to the fact that the three of his books which have been translated into English,<sup>10</sup> although well known otherwise, have exercised no great influence on Granet. The preferences of Granet go to *Le Suicide*<sup>11</sup> and *Quelques Formes Primitives de Classification*<sup>12</sup>. The former is by Durkheim; the latter is by Durkheim and Mauss in collaboration.

Granet has said: "For myself and for others it is neither *Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique* nor *La Division du Travail* which has shaken and conquered me, it is *Le Suicide*; and I believe that sociologists might possibly be divided into those who are inspired by *Le Suicide* and the others..."<sup>13</sup>

In *Quelques Formes Primitives de Classification* Granet has seen something very valuable, the principle of discovery: "The principle of their [the sociologists] discovery is found in the paper on *Quelques Formes Primitives de Classification* published by Durkheim and Mauss. It gives me pleasure to say — and it may be of interest to add that very few specialists have quoted them — that the few pages of this paper which concern China should mark a date in the history of sinological studies."<sup>14</sup> We may say that Granet has admirably applied this principle in all his works, above all in *La Pensée Chinoise*, his most recent and most successful work.

<sup>9</sup> Marcel Granet, *Fêtes et Chansons Anciennes de la Chine*, 2nd edition, 1929 (referred to hereafter as *FC*), Introduction, p. 1, note 3.

<sup>10</sup> (1) *Les Formes Élémentaires de la Vie Religieuse*, 1912; 2nd edition, 1925; 3rd edition, 1937. In English, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life: A Study in Religious Sociology*, tr. Joseph Ward Swain, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1915. (2) *De la Division du Travail Social*, 1893; 2nd edition, 1902; 6th edition, 1932. In English, *Emile Durkheim on the Division of Labor in Society*, tr. George Simpson, New York, Macmillan, 1934. (3) *Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique*, 1895; 2nd edition, 1901; 9th edition, 1938. In English, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, tr. Sarah A. Solovay and John A. Mueller, The University of Chicago Press, 1938.

<sup>11</sup> The first edition of this book was printed in 1897; the second appeared without correction in 1930. One must supplement this work with *Les Causes du Suicide* by Maurice Halbwachs, 1930.

<sup>12</sup> Emile Durkheim et Marcel Mauss, "Quelques Formes Primitives de Classification. Contribution à l'étude des représentations collectives", *L'Année Sociologique*, v. 6. 1903 p. 1-72.

<sup>13</sup> "Discussion du programme de l'enseignement de la sociologie", *Bulletin de l'Institut Français de Sociologie*, 2nd year, fasc. 3. 1932 (referred to hereafter as *Bulletin*), p. 106.

<sup>14</sup> Marcel Granet, *La Pensée Chinoise*. 1934 (referred to hereafter as *PC*), p. 29, note 1; *FC*, p. 249, note; *DL*, p. 615. We analyze in detail "the few pages of this paper which concern China" in the second part of our article, "The Sociology of Marcel Mauss", *The Sociological World* 社會學界, v. 10, June, 1938, Yenching University. This article is referred to hereafter as "Sociology of Mauss".

Although the founder of the French sociological school is Durkheim, its chief living representative is Durkheim's successor, Marcel Mauss (1872-19—), one of the founders of the young school of French ethnology. Unfortunately few of his works have as yet been translated into English, but his influence on Granet is deeper and more fruitful than Durkheim's, as Granet himself states.<sup>15</sup> I see two reasons for this: Mauss is at the same time a sociologist, an historian of religions, and a gifted mythologist; in this he has the same type of mind as Granet. Secondly, the French sociological school which Mauss represents has entered a new stage, chiefly as regards method. Durkheim's *Les Règles de la Méthode Sociologique* has a philosophical character and frequently gives categorical statements. Though Mauss's method is essentially the same as Durkheim's, it is more supple, better suited for concrete studies, more exacting, more fruitful. For example, Mauss uses prudently and cautiously the comparative method, but at the same time he uses also the historical method.<sup>17</sup> He insists on collaboration between historians and sociologists.<sup>18</sup> These ideas are very well suited to Granet's mind.

On this point, may I recall a personal memory? When I saw Professor Granet in his home for the first time, on November 14, 1928, he advised me to read *L'Année Sociologique*. He told me that the section on general sociology did not deserve much attention because of its philosophical tendency; but he recommended that I read well the section on religious sociology, saying that he read it often and found some things which were highly significant. Then, talking to me about Mauss, he insisted on my taking his lectures and on my reading his entire works, and reading them several times. While escorting me to the threshold of his drawing room, he advised me to give at least two months to each of two articles by Mauss: "*Les Variations Saisonnières des Sociétés Eskimos*"<sup>19</sup> and "*Essai sur le Don*".<sup>20</sup> His last statement was with emphasis on each word: "Read slowly and always slowly."<sup>21</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Marcel Granet, "Le Dépôt de l'enfant sur le Sol". *Revue Archéologique*, 1922, p. 34; *DL*, p. 611, note 1; *Bulletin*, p. 105. See also my collection, *Conversations with French Sociologists* 法國社會學家訪問記, 1930 (manuscript in Chinese). This paper is referred to hereafter as *Conversations*.

<sup>16</sup> Regarding the opinion of Mauss on the comparative method, refer to *Annales Sociologiques*, Series C: "Sociologie Juridique et Morale", fascicule 1, 1935, p. 72-75; "Sociology of Mauss", part II.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Marcel Mauss, *Les Civilisations, éléments et formes*; "Civilisation. le mot et l'idée", ed. "Centre international de Synthèse", 1930; *Bulletin de la société française de Philosophie*, April, 1923, p. 25; *L'Année Sociologique*, v. 12, 1913, p. 3-4; etc...

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *L'Année Sociologique*, New Series I, 1925, p. 287-288; Mauss, "Avertissement", in Henri Hubert, *Les Celtes et l'Expansion Celtique*, 1932, p. xxiv; Bouglé, *Bilan de la Sociologie Française Contemporaine*, 1935, p. 93-94; Centre d'études de politique étrangère, *Les Sciences Sociales en France, Enseignement et recherche*, 1937, p. 39.

<sup>19</sup> *L'Année Sociologique*, v. 9, 1906, p. 39-132; Cf. "Sociology of Mauss". p. 313-333.

<sup>20</sup> "Essai sur le Don, Forme et Raison de l'échange dans les Sociétés Archaïques". *L'Année Sociologique*, New Series I, 1925, p. 30-186; Cf. *Sociology of Mauss*, 2nd part (not yet published).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Conversations*, ch. on Granet.

Later I understood the value of this advice and especially I have realized that slow, reflective and repeated reading was Granet's method of work.<sup>22</sup> Through this method he has extracted the quintessence of Mauss's works, as is shown in all his writings and especially in *Danses et Légendes de la Chine Ancienne* and *La Pensée Chinoise*.

I believe that Granet is the scholar who has been most influenced by Mauss, who has understood him best and who has best applied his method, so that he is not only a "*sinologue sociologisant*", according to the expression of Georges Davy,<sup>23</sup> but he will also doubtless be the legitimate heir of Mauss, the true representative of the French sociological school after him. One thing is to be remembered. Present day sociology is no longer philosophy. The disciples of Mauss are all historical sociologists or ethnographers, they are not pure theorists.<sup>24</sup>

Whether we read Granet or listen to his lectures, we perceive quickly that he gives much importance to method. To my mind his long introduction to *Danses et Légendes de la Chine Ancienne* is the best statement of his method, and a revolutionary manifesto in the realm of sinology. It is regrettable that the book has not been translated into English. In this introduction Granet first states this problem: "By which method may we establish a body of documents giving us information on the conditions of fact and of environment which have favored the appearance of seigniorial power and of the institutions connected with it?"<sup>25</sup> Granet frankly says, "In China and on our subject we can, in fact, find no documents other than legends which have been transformed into history (*légendes historisées*); the following remarks take into account that type of document alone."<sup>26</sup>

Are those documents worthy to be considered historical documents? Granet has his own particular attitude towards documentary criticism. While Chinese historians in general endeavor to trace the literary significance of texts and to determine the precise publication date of books, Granet looks in texts for significant traces which will help him to understand aspects of ancient religion in China. He condemns as a fundamental error the attitude of rationalistic historians who give up facts for the sake of texts and do not try to reach the deep, mythical sources of those texts. "What is the meaning of *authentic* and of *false*? Merely this: that of two arrangements of facts, one is attested as more ancient than the other, and that the second, through a more or less marked artifice, has been attached to the first. As to the facts, in both cases they were supplied by tradition. Tradition is worth what it is worth (this remains to be seen). When concerned with a past reaching back a thousand years in a country where the archives (whenever there were any) have always been rapidly destroyed, is the worth of tradition greater or smaller according to whether it has been found three or four centuries earlier or later? Is the authentic *Shu Ching* the nearest to

<sup>22</sup> *Infra.*, p. 233, regarding the lecturing method of Granet.

<sup>23</sup> Georges Davy, *Sociologues d'hier et d'aujourd'hui*, 1931, p. 21.

<sup>24</sup> *Infra.*, p. 235 and note 52.

<sup>25</sup> *DL*, p. 24.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* p. 24, note 1.

the Confucian text? Possibly. Is the false *Shu Ching* a fabrication? It has been fabricated with accounts which are found, for example, in Mo Ti. Mo Ti and Confucius are approximately contemporary. Do the documents differ in value? Is the authentic *Shu Ching* less of a fabrication than the other?"<sup>27</sup>

On the same grounds Granet says, "There is good reason for discarding the traditional opposition between orthodox and unorthodox texts. The former deserve no more credence than the latter. Both use the same themes in a different spirit."<sup>28</sup> He is, therefore, entitled to conclude, "All texts, without distinction, can serve to supply facts. Criticism will be fruitful when it starts from facts and not from texts."<sup>29</sup>

By facts Granet means social facts. His works, from his fundamental *Danses et Légendes de la Chine Ancienne*, his most concrete study, to *La Civilisation Chinoise* and *La Pensée Chinoise*, his most general books, are not studies of literary history, but studies of the history of institutions and beliefs. In *La Civilisation Chinoise* Granet tries to discover "the social system of the Chinese in ancient times"<sup>30</sup> and in *La Pensée Chinoise*, "the institutional basis of Chinese thought".<sup>31</sup>

On the question of historical dating, there is room for argument.<sup>32</sup> But Granet's position is quite clear: "We must take our materials from authors of different periods, of unequal value, of uncertain history, of varied origin, of opposing schools. And it would be wasted effort to seek for each of the facts certain and precise dates or localizations."<sup>33</sup> Shall we conclude that the facts studied by Granet are not historical facts? On this point we should note that Granet studies a prehistoric period, which he calls, "the age of semi-written literature".<sup>34</sup> The historical facts of that period are "disguised centos", which "in the broad frame-work of abstract chronology have only a ritual date."<sup>35</sup> Hence all written documents concerning that period carry dates, the exactitude of which cannot be proved. But even if their dates are not absolutely accurate, even if those documents have been written much later than the dates they bear, the one thing that matters for us is that these documents tell facts which have been told from mouth to mouth as legends of that prehistoric period. So that those facts and those legends preserve all their symbolical and mythological value. Hence, Granet calls such dates "ritual dates". I believe that Granet, writing as a mythologist, was able to explain sociologically and mythologically the conceptions of

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27-28.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 592.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 595.

<sup>30</sup> Marcel Granet, *La Civilisation Chinoise, La Vie Publique et la Vie Privée*, 1929 (hereafter referred to as CC), p. 4.

<sup>31</sup> PC, p. 4.

<sup>32</sup> See Philippe de Vargas. "The Place of History Among Sciences and its Relation to Sociology", reprinted from *The Chinese Social and Political Science Review*, v. 8, No. 2, April 1924, p. 12.

<sup>33</sup> DL, p. 40.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 600.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 600.

time, space and numbers of the ancient Chinese. Therein lies the great value of his last work, *La Pensée Chinoise*.

Although Granet considers the search for an accurate date to be a fruitless task, he suggests that sociological analysis could determine "sociological dates". Facts could be placed within the framework of the period according to the correspondence "between certain states of technique and certain states of beliefs and of the social structure."<sup>36</sup> Such a date is, just as an archeological date, established from real facts and not from pure reasoning. Granet affirms, "Sociological analysis comes to the help of historical criticism, which would be helpless without its assistance."<sup>37</sup>

As to his criteria for the selection of materials, Granet has said, "Let us choose the richest among the legendary data. Let us exclude neither those deformed by the historical spirit, nor those which have the reputation of being mere collections of fables or inventions."<sup>38</sup> He adds in a note, "Those I read with most attention are: *The Elegies* of Ch'u, and the odes of Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju, Lieh Tzu, Chuang Tzu, Mo Tzu, Huai Nan Tzu, Han Fei Tzu, Yen Tzu, the *Lü Shih Ch'un Ch'iu*, the *Lun Heng* . . . ."<sup>39</sup>

Granet's reading method deserves our attention: "We must compel ourselves to a slow and direct reading of the texts,"<sup>40</sup> and in the note, "I mean reading several times, always without reference to the translation if there is one. The most valuable facts (which are connections) reveal themselves only through details of style and composition, peculiarities which are discovered only by long practice. When one has discovered a new one, one must re-read the entire text with it in mind. One must repeat this process every time one discovers a new scent; I once read the *Tso Chuan* to collect the names of the gates of the capital city of Sung; when I was led to take an interest in the swamps, I re-read the material".<sup>41</sup>

It must be added that Granet does not use indexes. He reads every work from beginning to end without omitting a single word. "One must," he says, "refuse to work with the help of encyclopedias or with anything which, in Chinese, may serve as an indexing system." Otherwise it "would be binding oneself to accepting late and probably arbitrary associations of fact."<sup>42</sup>

Granet has never had the ambition to reconstruct a history of ancient China. In the first sentence of *Danses et Légendes de la Chine Ancienne* he states, "I shall not commit the mistake of wanting to reconstruct a single

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 602; see especially p. 52-53.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42, note 4.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42, note 2.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, Although Granet does not use indexes in his reading, all his most important works contain indexes. Strictly speaking, the proper method of indexing has existed in China only since 1931 with the Harvard-Yenching Institute *Sinological Index Series*. The publication of this series, directed by Professor William Hung 洪業 (煨蓮), marks an important date in Chinese science.

one of the Chinese legends."<sup>43</sup> Later he adds, "Even when a sufficiently large mass of facts seem to refer to the same context, never attempt to reconstruct a legend or a mythical figure."<sup>44</sup>

Another important point is that Granet resolutely rejects rationalism; he believes that it is precisely the "incorrigible rationalism"<sup>45</sup> which carries our traditionalistic writers into error. The work of these rationalists consists mistakenly in "purifying the texts", that is in eliminating (under the pretext that the text has been altered) the facts wherein the profound reason of the ancients does not seem to manifest itself."<sup>46</sup>

Granet does not care for philological criticism which historians use by preference. He believes that "philological criticism by itself cannot produce from the texts a positive history."<sup>47</sup> While Chavannes had made much use of that method, and Pelliot and Maspero did the same, Granet alone has preferred another method. "Let us substitute for philological criticism a decidedly sociological analysis which first takes into consideration the history of institutions and beliefs."<sup>48</sup> This is what distinguishes Granet from the other sinologues. This is perhaps his true originality and his peculiar contribution.

Granet does not have much confidence in the comparative ethnographical method. The following passage reveals his reasons for prudence and his attitude as an historian: "Ethnographical erudition is a recent fashion. Although I have *The Golden Bough* as well as a collection of *l'Année Sociologique*, although I know how to use their indexes, and although it is proved that learned studies can be made by using them, I have not succumbed to the temptation of enriching my poor Chinese documents by swelling them with impressive documents borrowed, through intermediaries, from the Africans or the Americans. I was afraid to lose my dust of centos in this rich mortar; I believe that the poor must never borrow from the rich."<sup>49</sup>

Lastly we must speak of the method of sociological analysis. This method has not been invented by Granet, it comes from the school of Durkheim and Mauss. Granet acknowledges it himself: "Perhaps a worker should express his gratitude when he has used an efficient tool which he has not invented."<sup>50</sup> But Granet has the merit of having applied it to sinology, thus discovering many surprising facts about ancient Chinese religions. That in itself is an important contribution.

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<sup>43</sup> *DL*, p. 1.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>47</sup> *CC*, p. 68.

<sup>48</sup> *DL*, p. 36.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

Although here we cannot treat at length the subject of sociological analysis,<sup>51</sup> we wish to indicate a few essential points which are directly connected with Granet in order to clear up some misunderstandings regarding him.

Sociological analysis, in the eyes of the French sociological school, is the best tool for discovery, the only one which secures a correct and complete explanation of social facts. It is a positive method which starts from facts, studies facts, and ends in other new facts. It is a method of scientific research and not at all an illustration of facts. Granet has written: "It may be (and it will be nothing new) that, from different sides, and, I imagine, meaning it as a compliment, these pages will make people tell me that I have wished to throw light on Chinese facts by means of 'sociological theories', or (just as well) that I have attempted to illustrate 'sociological theory' with the help of Chinese facts. Is it necessary to declare that I know nothing of what is called sociological theory or theories? Ever since there have been sociologists, has not their first aim been to discover facts? Perhaps I have indicated a few which had not been noticed before."<sup>52</sup>

The method of sociological analysis has as its object facts which it aims to explain, and not to describe, as does historical method; however, these two methods are complementary, sociological method explaining the facts which historical method has first described. Granet's method derives from an admirable fusion of these two methods.

Sociological analysis is first of all an analysis of concrete facts. It limits itself to particular cases, not abstract generality. That is why *Danses et Légendes de la Chine Ancienne* are presented "in the form of a collection of documents which are analyzed, preceded by a somewhat long introduction and followed by a rather short conclusion."<sup>53</sup> *Fêtes et Chansons Anciennes de la Chine* and *La Polygynie Sororale et le Sororat dans la Chine féodale* are in the main composed in the same way. Although in the two general works, *La Civilisation Chinoise* and *La Pensée Chinoise*, Granet seems to aim at "un exposé d'ensemble",<sup>54</sup> actually in them he studies as well particular and typical cases; he always prefers and applies the case method which he sometimes calls "the applied method".<sup>55</sup> Although Granet has made many discoveries concerning ancient Chinese civilization, he does not pretend to write a complete history of China. He stated this plainly in *La Civilisation Chinoise*: "There is for the moment no possibility of writing a handbook of Chinese antiquity." And he repeated it in *La Pensée Chinoise*: "I would not accept

<sup>51</sup> Cf. "Sociology of Mauss", part 2.

<sup>52</sup> PC, p. 29, note 1.

<sup>53</sup> DL, p. 53.

<sup>54</sup> CC, p. 4.

<sup>55</sup> Bulletin, p. 104.

<sup>56</sup> CC, p. 3. And on p. 6 Granet says, "I have proceeded mainly with the aid of examples and I have only insisted on decisive points."

the task of writing a handbook of Chinese literature or philosophy."<sup>57</sup> This is to be kept in mind when you read Granet. . . .

Considered from another point of view the method of sociological analysis is also essentially a comparative method; for without comparison it is not possible to have any explanation. Fustel de Coulanges has said, "The comparative method, so dangerous for those who do not use it well, is, however, necessary to the historian."<sup>58</sup> Only, sociological comparison differs from the old comparative method by its precision and above all by its point of view of the "category of totality".<sup>59</sup> Although Granet does not want to use his enormous ethnographical erudition to throw light on Chinese facts, he does compare the facts with each other. For example, his paragraph on the Chia Ku meeting<sup>60</sup> to my mind is a comparative study, showing in a typical way the strength of his method.

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In my estimation Granet's greatest merit is that he took recourse neither to ethnological erudition nor to the new facts recently discovered by excavations. He has worked exclusively on Chinese texts, which had been studied by Chinese sinologues for over a thousand years, and on which they had said almost all that they could say. He discovered in them, however, facts that nobody had seen before him, and gave us a new interest in these old books from which we now hope to gain more new things. Is not this one of the great contributions of Granet?

What has made it possible for Granet to discover unknown things is his method, new to sinology, of sociological analysis, as well as his new attitude, differing from that of both traditional historians and scientific — rationalistic — historians, a sociological attitude made fruitful by a mythologist's attitude. It is not surprising that he looked at sinology with new eyes. Perhaps, his studies will make us understand the importance of the religious aspects of Chinese civilization, hitherto neglected by our Chinese sinologues and even by those of the West.

This paper is only a rapid introduction to Granet's sinology.<sup>61</sup> So we cannot discuss the question of whether Granet's discoveries are simply hypotheses or whether he has really discovered new facts. We must wait for excavations to produce proof of whether Granet's discoveries are false or true. For the present they have a provisional character, for prehistorical

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<sup>57</sup> PC, p. 3. He has explained his aim on p. 13: "I propose merely to analyze a *limited number of Chinese conceptions and attitudes* which offers the best opportunity to be objective. I have only taken into consideration *the most significant of them* in order to examine them in detail. (The italics are mine.)

<sup>58</sup> J.-H. Tourneur-Aumont, *Fustel de Coulanges*, Paris, 1931, p. 182.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. PC, p. 29, note 1; *Bulletin*, p. 105-106; "Sociology of Mauss", p. 291 ff.

<sup>60</sup> DL, part I, ch. 3, "Danseurs sacrifiés", p. 171-216; see also p. 35-37, p. 594.

<sup>61</sup> The author is now preparing a somewhat longer study on the sinology of Granet.

archeology is only beginning in China. Granet says at the end of *Danses et Légendes de la Chine Ancienne*, "The question will be settled only by excavations;"<sup>62</sup> hence we know that although he could not use the results of recent excavations, he considers them highly important.<sup>63</sup>

In conclusion we should like to quote one more sentence of Granet, showing that he is not only a great Western sinologue but also a great friend of our country: "China represents a cultural tradition which is a sister of the best Western tradition. We may, therefore, wish success to the ideas it stands for."<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> DL. p. 619. See also CC, p. 74.

<sup>63</sup> Aside from *La Pensée Chinoise*, all of Granet's books were written before 1929. The first volume of *Report on the Excavation at Anyang* 安陽發掘報告 was published in that year; the second volume in 1930; the third in 1931 and the fourth in 1933. In 1932 the first three volumes of this important report were chosen for the Stanislas Julien Prize. This proves that French sinologues are not ignorant of recent archeological discoveries in China.

<sup>64</sup> Marcel Granet, "Les Chinois et Leurs Voisins", *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, Nov. 6, 1937, p. 8.

"Marcel Granet: An Appreciation." *Yenching Journal of Social Studies*, vol. I, no. 2, 1939, p. 226+. *China from Empire to Republic*, <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/67e4X9>. Accessed 11 Mar. 2018.

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I had already written my own article when I saw a typed copy of the above article by Mr. Jablonski. I was happy to find that Mr. Jablonski's observations, although they do not agree with my own, do not contradict them. They are, indeed, complementary.

Yang Kun 楊堃

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