

Institute of social research, Peking

Social Research Department

First Annual Report

The China Foundation
For the Promotion of Education and Culture

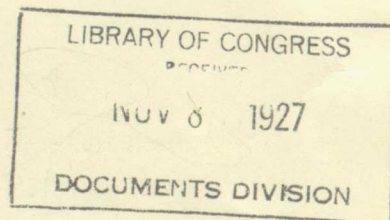
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PEKING, CHINA



July 1st 1927

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P.H.R. 26 Nov. 27,
MC 22 Aug. 31

FIRST ANNUAL REPORT

1926—1927.

I. INTRODUCTION.

Unsurpassed by any country, China presents a rich field for students of social sciences to make researches, in view of her vast territory, long historical tradition and innumerable problems that have arisen from contact and conflict between the eastern and western cultures. Studies in social and economic subjects have indeed been made now and then, but they represent as a rule merely sporadic efforts by a few energetic individuals and are seldom organized or coordinated. In the colleges and universities, professors have brought out, at times, works, of great value, but as they are usually interrupted and hampered by their routine duties, it has been extremely difficult for them to conduct studies on a large scale, and yield more results. Certain institutions, like the Shanghai Bureau of Markets and the Chinese Government Bureau of Economic Information, have also published periodically valuable studies, but as they are mainly devoted to particular fields of economics, such as prices, business conditions and industrial prospects, many other important projects have been still left untouched. Such being the case, it has constantly been felt by Chinese as well as friends of China that there is an urgent need for conducting systematic researches into the conditions of Chinese life, particularly the work and labour of the teeming millions. Suggestions have come from various quarters that, in order to meet the need, some permanent organization should be formed.

Through a generous offer of the Institute of Social and Religious Research, New York City, giving two donations to promote social research in this country, it was made possible for the China Foundation for the Promotion of Education and Culture, at a regular meeting of its Trustees in Peking, February 1926, to take action, establishing a Social Research Department in connection with it. Mr. L. K. Tao, Professor of Sociology of the National University, Peking, was appointed Secretary in charge of the Department. The aim of the Department, in its initial stages, will be limited to conducting inquiries into the working and living conditions of Chinese working people and promoting similar studies in other institutions.

In June, 1926, the preliminary arrangements were completed and the Department was formally inaugurated on July 1st.

A summary review of the organization and activities of this Department during the past year is given hereinunder.

II. THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

At the meeting of the executive Committee of the China Foundation held on March 26th 1926, it was decided that an Advisory Committee should be organized to give expert advice on the research projects, investigations and publications of the Department and to make connections between the Department and institutions of different localities for the purpose of conducting cooperative studies. On the Committee are Prof. J. B. Tayler, Mr. Sidney D. Gamble, Prof. G. W. Sarvis, Prof. J. L. Buck, Mr. Y. S. Djang, Mr. D. K. Lieu, Dr. Chen Ta, Mrs. W. T. Zung Chiu, Dr. Chang Poling and Mr. V. K. Ting. The first meeting of the Advisory Committee took place on May 14th, 1926, at which views were exchanged and experiences of various members of the Committee on the line of social investigation were related.

The Department owes in many ways deep obligations to various members on the Committee in promoting its studies. Thus, Prof. J. L. Buck has very generously supplied the Department investigation forms and literature prepared by him and put at its disposal a number of publications for reference, just at the time when they were most needed. Other members have also shown their readiness to advice on matters that arose in the course of our inquiries.

III. ORGANIZATION.

There have been changes in the personnel of the staff of the Department in the course of last year. At present, the staff consists of the following members:-

- Secretary in charge of the Department.
- Field Secretary in charge of the survey work.
- Five investigators making investigations in person.
- Archivist in charge of documents, correspondence, collection of books and editorial work.
- Three on the statistical staff engaged in computation and statistical work.

It is interesting to note that of the staff members, seven are graduates from colleges and had specialized in some branch of

social science. Clerical services of the Department are rendered by the staff of the Foundation

IV. STUDIES AND PROJECTS.

1. HANDICRAFT WORKERS.

The first project taken up by the Department was a handicraft workers' survey in Peking. Beginning from August 1st, 1926, the survey was concluded in February. Four investigators took part in the survey. They visited 500 households and returned an equal number of schedules. They visited also stores, workshops, bazaars, market-fairs and public offices where data relevant to the survey were procurable. The schedules returned by the investigators are awaiting analysis and computation.

2. FAMILY BUDGET INQUIRY.

With a view to obtaining more complete data on family incomes and expenses, two investigators were employed to keep daily accounts for fifty families. The inquiry lasted seven months and altogether 300 complete account books were secured.

3. THE FAMILY BUDGET OF THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS OF PEKING.

Through the courtesy and assistance of the educational authorities in Peking, this Department was enabled to start a family budget study of the Peking elementary school teachers in October 1926. Of the sixty-six teachers who volunteered to keep accounts for the whole month of November, twenty-five returned their accounts as soon as they were completed. Although the data of the inquiry are hardly sufficient as to be called representative, the number of families being small and the period for keeping the accounts being short, yet the result will no doubt yield some figures that are worthy of attention.

In this connection, our thanks are due to both the local educational authorities who warmly supported the proposal of the family budget study and the teachers who kept their daily accounts with patience and care. We are glad to report that all the accounts were excellently done and are of great value for a study of the cost of living of the elementary school teachers in Peking.

4. FAMILY BUDGET STUDIES OF SHANGHAI FACTORY WORKERS.

Seeing that more labour troubles had occurred in these years in Shanghai than anywhere else and that the modern labour problem loomed large in the eyes of the Shanghai people, a few organizations at Shanghai suggested to this Department to start a survey of the cost of living of the factory workers in that city. Accordingly the Secretary made a visit to Shanghai in August and held conferences with those who were interested in the project. It was then arranged that a trial study should be made under the auspices of the Shanghai Industrial Research Association and this Department contributed some fund for carrying out the work. This study covered the period from October to December. Of the fifty books which were received by the Department, about ten are valuable and are to be presented in a report.

With a view to conducting on a much larger scale the Shanghai family budget inquiry, arrangements were concluded in February of this Year between this Department and the Shanghai Bureau of Markets providing that the latter should supervise the recording of daily accounts of 200 families, for a period of ten months commencing from April 1st., while the former should contribute the salaries of four investigators and other incidental expenses. On account of the disturbing conditions which then prevailed in Shanghai, however, the inquiry failed to start at the scheduled date, though it is expected to commence it as soon as circumstances permit.

5. SURVEY OF FACTORY WORKERS AT TANGKU.

Through the kind permission and encouragement of the authorities of the Chiu-Ta Salt Refining Company and the Yungli Soda Works, both located at Tangku, this Department found it possible to begin in April an inquiry of the living and working conditions of the labourers in these two factories. As these labourers represent those of the modern factory par excellence and Tangku is only an outport of Tientsin, being within a distance of about twenty-five miles, the inquiry will serve as an exemplary study of factory workers in North China. It will include 100 homes and 200 individuals.

6. MARKETING OF FARM PRODUCTS.

With a view to studying the prices of farm products, this Department began in April an investigation on marketing. As there is only one investigator in charge of the study, its scope

will be limited only to wheat, maize and millet in the area of the Metropolitan District and cotton in the Chihli Province.

7. THE RURAL SURVEY.

The Field Secretary of this Department, while giving a course of lectures on social survey last year at the Yenching University, conducted his students in the class to make an investigation of two villages near the Western Hills, in the vicinity of Peking. The investigation will include two hundred households. In view of the lack of available time for the students to devote their full time to the work, one graduate student is being employed to complete the survey so well begun by the class.

8. PRIZE ESSAYS.

An arrangement was concluded in September 1926 between this Department and the Social Science Department of the National University of Peking whereby four prizes are offered each year during the two academic years 1926-1928 to the students of the latter institution who are able to show their excellent work done in research on some subject of sociological importance. The prizes are of two grades: two of three hundred dollars each and two of two hundred dollars each. The entry of competition is open only to graduates and the fourth year students, while the subject of research and the award are to be decided jointly by the authorities of the two institutions. These prizes are offered with a view to promoting research study among social science students of an advanced grade. The last day on which all the research papers should be sent in for the first year is July 31st.

9. MANUAL FOR SOCIAL INVESTIGATORS.

In order to introduce the new technique of social study known by its various names as social survey, field work or social investigation, and to popularize it among our people, it has been thought highly urgent to compile a book on the subject. The archivist was entrusted with the writing of such a book. Chapin's "Field Work and Social Research" was taken as a model, though the writer has made wide use of other books for reference, such as Richmond's Social Diagnosis, Bowley's Elements of Statistics, Langlois and Seignobos' Introduction to the Study of History, and various Chinese sources. Thus while the chapter headings follow chiefly those in Chapin's book, the contents have been greatly changed and enriched. The manuscript of the book was sent to the press in April and it is hoped that it will be published in July.

10. THE CHINESE LABOUR YEARBOOK.

In order to collect all the available material on labour in China, now scattered in newspapers and periodicals or buried in official archives and publications and present it in a handy volume for those who are interested in Chinese labour questions, this Department decided to compile a Chinese labour yearbook. A tentative list of the contents of the yearbook was drawn up and published, and with it letters have been circulated in various institutions soliciting data on labour. The archivist is now engaged in a study of the materials that are to be found in different libraries in Peking.

11. THE REFERENCE LIBRARY.

This Department has since its inauguration commenced to collect publications having bearing on social research and its cognate subjects. It is hoped that the collection will in time grow into a good-sized library, so that our staff as well as social science students in general may have access to references in their research work.

Not counting the periodicals, the collection comprised, up to the end of May, 409 copies, of which 230 were acquired by purchase and 179 were presented by private and public institutions at home and abroad.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The problems of which this Department has so far made some study may be grouped under three heads:

- (1) socio-economic studies on the handicraft and factory workers.
- (2) family budget studies.
- (3) marketing of farm products.

Indeed, the studies are all confined to localities and in view of the wide extent of this country, they seem to be but a mere drop of water in the ocean. Yet one may confidently hope that these beginnings, small though they are, would promote a more widespread recognition of the importance of social research in this land.

The Department is now in possession of complete data of four studies. Owing to the insufficient number of computers and also on account of the fact that the staff has hitherto devoted its time mainly to the planning and conducting of investigations, they have not yet been thoroughly analysed and tabulated. It is now

planned that henceforth the staff will occupy itself entirely with computing and statistical work so that all the reports may be published before the end of this year.

The year which is just closed is an eventful one for the staff of this Department. It has engaged itself in a most interesting adventure into some phases of Chinese social life. It has not only acquired first-hand knowledge about the technique of social investigation and facts of social life but it has also discovered problems without number that await study and analysis. Each study opens prospects for further study, each problem leads to innumerable others, no less urgent and important than the original problem itself. Thus we have entertained far more research projects than our small staff could possibly tackle. In this country social study, in its strict modern sense, is still an unexplored field and this is as it should be. Fortunately, signs are not wanting to show that governmental as well as academic institutions are now all eager to promote social investigations and study projects. One may perhaps be allowed to conclude that scientific study of social phenomena has not only come to stay but will continue to develop in China where immense possibilities of its progress are portended.

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