"Folk Literature Run by the Folk"[1]: A New Development in the People's Republic of China

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PEOPLE'S FOLKLORE: THE CASE OF DAYE

One remarkable theory advocated by many Chinese folklorists is that of " from the people and to the people." It holds that since folklore comes from the masses, it must ultimately be returned to the masses. In other words, the role of folklorists should be transitional; the preservation and investigation of folklore should ultimately be taken over by the peasants themselves. This view clearly disagrees with the view of the majority of Western experts. To most Western scholars, the peasants are presumed to be illiterate or poorly educated, and too much occupied with the concerns of daily life to record and interpret their own culture. Some folklorists may still secretly sympathize with Andrew Lang's estimate—namely, the peasantry is backward and barbarous. In the people's Republic of China, where the peasantry was primarily responsible for the overthrow of the *ancien régime* and remains to be the center of attention of the present government, the attitude towards the folk is far more deferential. Chinese folklorists strive to prove that they are serving, not using, the common people. Some appear to feel like intruding on the peasants' domain and wish to involve the owners of the lore as much as they can. One reason for this attitude is that such folklorists are usually, in American parlance, " public folklorists " (Dorson 1982: 97–103) recruited from, and remaining very close to, the peasants. A few who know the Western attitude find it elitist and arrogant and want China to follow a different path. As one of them put it: " [We] resolutely oppose that type of ' stealing-the-treasures-and-kicking-away-[the-owners] ' bourgeois mentality. We should raise the cultural level of the masses while preparing cadres for art and literature . . . ." (Zhu

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Yichu 1959: 9).

The goal of inducing the masses to participate in folkloristic activities remained only a goal in the 1950's and the early 1960's. It urged field workers to read or submit their recorded versions to the folk for approval before publishing them. Otherwise, the project of " expanding [our] work as it develops, so that more and more people can join us in more and more ways " (Mao 1961: 12) does not appear to have gone very far, before the Cultural Revolution brutally stopped all folkloristic activities. Since the suppression of the ultra left, however, devotees to folk literature have made a spectacular resurgence. When I was in Beijing in September 1985, some members of the China Society for the Study of Folk Art and Literature talked to me enthusiastically about the folk starting to collect and publish their own oral literature. I asked for written documentation and received the following article, allegedly the most detailed report at that time. The following is a close English translation, with several irrelevant passages and an inaccurate publication list omitted to save space.

FOLK LITERATURE RUN BY THE FOLK

Very recently, the Folk Literature Research Department of Daye County in Hubei, in order to extend its work of collecting and arranging[2] folk literature, is exploring a line [which may be called] " folk literature run by the folk."

Since Hu Hanhua and Zuo Xiangdong, peasant specialists[3] of Daye County, awarded the Spring Bamboo Shoot Prize for Folk Literature and the Spring Rain Prize for Drama, there have been strong responses throughout the county. Hu Xuejun has established a Spring Breeze Prize for Music, and Deng Hansong a Spring Thunder Prize for Regional Opera. The awarding of these prizes has brought with it the messages of spring . . . .

After the Third National Congress, peasants have become better off. They are emerging not only as a new type of peasant, cultured, and engaged in scientific farming, etc.; they have also become masters of their own culture. They are marching towards higher levels of cultural pursuits . . . [They are not like us]. We have only limited resources, and certain people do not think much of folk literature.

Now, things are looking up. The peasants are carrying on the operations themselves . . . . Some lovers of folk literature invest funds to edit and publish works of folk literature collected by themselves. Others collect materials from entire villages and have them published with funds donated by some peasant specialists . . . . In some cases, every member of a specialist's family loves folk litera-

> ture; thus the young and the old all help with collection and arrangement. In other cases, a single individual may be responsible for an entire collection. County departments for information and culture heartily support such activities . . . .
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> Now, this new event of folk-literature-run-by-the-folk, together with the new people it involves, has not only become known in the entire county, but also [begun] to influence neighboring counties and provinces. When Comrade Li Erzhong, adviser to the provincial committee of the Party, heard of this situation, he commented: "The roots of folk literature are to be found in thousands of hamlets and ten-thousands of [rural] families. Only when its development is left to these hamlets and families can the most precious [productions] of folk literature be dug up and discovered." (Zhongguo 1985: 3: 1–2).

Between September 20 and 23, 1985, the county government of Daye sponsored a conference in its town hall. Professional folklorists of Hubei province and amateur collectors and carriers of Daye were all invited to attend, so that they could discuss future projects and become better acquainted with one another. I was then in Hubei province and also received an invitation, but could not go because of poor health. Professor Liu Shouhua, chairman of the Chinese Department of Central China Teachers University at Wuhan, managed to attend and, upon his return to Wuhan, delivered to me a package of seven publications, all gifts from that county. They are: *Daye minjian chuanshuo gushiji* (Dayexian 1984), *Jiating minjian wenxueji* (Guo 1985), *Minjian geyaoji* (Ke 1985b), *Minjian gushiji* (Ke 1985c), *Siguzha fengqing* (Daye 1985), *Tudi pusa di gushi* (Dayexian 1983), and *Zhang Fengmin minjian wenxue zuopinxuan* (Zhang Fengmin 1985).

The above list is admittedly incomplete. Even by September 1985 the villagers of Daye County had brought out five other works, I have been told. They have since then remained very active and kept on publishing new titles. My wife, Lee-hsia Ting, who stayed in Wuhan until July 1986, corresponded with Zhu Zhenshan, an official of the Cultural Bureau of Daye, trying to acquire other publications on my behalf. Mr. Zhu's reply to her gave eighteen other titles, some already unavailable, or not yet published. My wife's efforts to secure them have proved futile. Except for *Daye minjian chuanshuo gushiji*, which is printed and designed for marketing, these collections almost all came out in very small numbers of copies, as they were meant for restricted circulation. Ke Xiaojie's *Minjian gushiji*, for instance, came out only in 50 copies; *Zhang Fengmin minijian wenxue zuopinxuan* in 100 copies.

They are all typewritten and mimeographed on flimsy paper, apparently because of the dire shortage of newsprint in China. One of them, *Jiating minjian wenxueji*, was written by hand on stencils. They are also slight in content. The lone printed work contains 148 pages; *Tudi pusa di gushi* and *Jiating minjian wenxueji* have respectively only 17 and 18 pages. The collectors are so modest in ambition that they have not even deposited at least one copy of their work at the local public library, as many Western authors would have done; my wife inquired about them at the Daye Public Library but got a negative reply. Zhu Zhenshan mailed his own collection of 15 books (including *Siguzha fengqing*) to Jia Zhi in Beijing. Mr. Jia promised to show me these volumes, but unfortunately never received them. Mr. Ke Xiaojie heard of my wife's efforts, and sent her his own publications in May 1986. Among them is *Jingji yaoyan xuanji* ,which had been brought out in June 1985 in 50 copies. It will be analyzed alongside of the seven other books mentioned earlier. After all the frustrations in our search, I am now convinced that most of the data are ephemeral like the majority of folklore materials, and may never be retrieved. Though not a comprehensive survey, this study presents at least what Daye wants to be known to the outside world, since seven of the eight works it discusses were given away to Chinese scholars by the people of Daye themselves.

Although these publications are not very respectable in format, they nevertheless show developments worthy of attention. First of all, the rapid succession of their appearance bears witness to the initial success leading Chinese folklorists have achieved in awakening the nation to China's immensely rich oral heritage. The populace of Daye, as Zhu Zhenshan has said, " like to talk about heaven and earth " (Zhu Zhenshan 1986). Among them, the *shuowen* 說文 people (i.e., active carriers) " frequently display their talents " during leisure hours (Zhang Fengmin 1985: preface). Not a single collection of the folk literature of this county, however, came out before 1983. The recent flurry of activities must therefore be interpreted as a response to the call by the headquarters of the China Society for the Study of Folk Literature and Art in Beijing for nationwide collection and recording, a call becoming increasingly effective since its resumption in 1978 on account of the removal of ideological shackles and the improved living conditions in the countryside. Ke Xiaojie, apparently one of the first promoters of these activities in Daye, is a member of the Hubei provincial chapter of the said Society. In the introduction to his collection of prose tales (Ke 1985c), he claimed to be following the principle of " faithful recording " and " careful arrangement," a principle now generally accepted throughout China because of the insistent efforts of the aforesaid Society. The visits of the

leaders of the Society—especially its vice president, Jia Zhi—to local officials in many parts of the country have been largely accountable for the sympathy from local officials, as can be easily gleaned from the prefaces of all the mimeographed works. Official or semi-offical blessings, often suspected or even despised by Western academicians, has undoubtedly played an important part in the reflorescence of activities in China since 1978. Over 600 publications in folklore are said to have come out there during 1985, and the actual number is generally believed to be much larger.

Collections from Daye: Stories

In regard to content, the works from Daye vary in value, but none of them may be construed as propaganda by any stretch of the imagination. Among them, the only printed book, *Daye minjian chuanshuo gushiji*, comes closest to the general level of the better folkloristic publications of the recent years, obviously because it has been most carefully prepared. It certainly does not measure up to the best, which are based completely on tapes, furnished extensively with textual and explanatory notes, and representing the attempts of scholarly collectors towards scientific methods (e.g., Tao 1984). As in the majority of better Chinese collections, however, all the narratives appear in an unadorned and straightforward style, generally regarded as characteristic of the average Chinese raconteur. With regard to bibliographic data, it falls a little short. It always gives the name of the collector of an item, but sometimes ignores the name of the original narrator, not to mention the latter's age, profession, level of education, etc. The order in which the narratives are arranged shows professional care, which appears to be on the increase among Chinese folklorists. The first two sections (stories about industry and mining and stories about place names and scenic sites) consist entirely in legends, the only exception on pp. 61–62 being a variant of Type 471A in my *Index* (Ting 1978: 85), which may have evolved from a legend. The third group, stories of folk characters, are again legends, except for those of cunning rascals, many of which I regard as ordinary folktales because they have been attributed to more than one character (Ting 1978: 11). The group under *minjian gushi* 民間故事 (folktales) consists only of märchen and long jokes. The section entitled *minjian xiaohua* 民間笑話 (folk jokes) is composed of short jokes. Most of the narratives in the last two groups can be identified with a number of the types in my *Index*. The classification of folk narratives by genre along lines generally recognized by Western authorities, it may be added, has become a general feature of the better prose tale collections published recently in China—an irrefutable rebuttal to the theory

once quite popular in the West, i.e., there cannot be any genre distinction in Chinese folk narratives.

Just as in *Daye minjian chuanshuo gushiji*, all but two (Ke 1985c: 8–9, 28–29) prose narratives in the other works under discussion are traditional and a-political, if not always well told. This is especially true of those in *Jiating minjian wenxueji*, a majority of which show inconsistencies and confusion, or are fragmentary. The collector does not tell us how she recorded them from her mother. The stories mostly contain folk rhymes, the mixture of prose and verse appearing to be a characteristic of narratives from Hubei province. No uncertainty or slip of memory, though, may be found among local legends. Those in *Siguzha fengqing* remind readers of motifs A900-A999, since they purport to explain peculiar features of the landscape near the village. Some of the common motifs (A972 and the following) concern marks or indentations on rocks allegedly left by animals or heroes of yore, and are popular also in other parts of the world. The characters mentioned in this book—celebrities from Chinese history, Buddhist or Taoist deities, dragons, etc.—are peculiar to China. Ke Xiaojie's *Minjian gushiji* includes four märchen besides jokes and legends that center around the subtleties of the Chinese language. It almost always gives the name of the carrier, sometimes also the sex and/or the area of distribution, displaying more knowledge of professional practice than the other two.

To many a non-Chinese folklorist, the most interesting collection in this group may well be *Tudi pusa di gushi*. The *tudi* 土地, local or village god, is the lowest deity in Chinese folk religion. Divinities of higher ranks may have been based on popular images of the upper classes; the *tudi* was obviously created by the peasant in his own image. Stories about him often reveal the intimate feelings of the Chinese peasantry. The first story in this collection, for instance, tells readers of his *raison d'être* and explains the peculiar way in which rural people often address him. The God of Stone, it asserts, expanded his realm so fast that the gods of vegetation could scarcely find standing room. They appealed to the Jade Emperor for help, but not a single deity volunteered assistance except for a humble street sweeper in heaven. "Make me Tudiye 土地爺 (Grandpa Earth)," he insisted. When he descended to earth, the rude God of Stone had to yield ground in order to show respect to the older generation. Plants, grains, animals, etc., were thus all saved. The love for the soil and the respect for age are combined together to produce a typically Chinese vegetation myth (Dayexian 1983: 1a).

The *tudi* became so popular with the folk, another story goes (Dayexian 1983: 6b), that the other gods would not let him stay in any big temple. The hick god inhabited only a small, roadside shrine but con-

tinued to have more worshippers than the others because he rendered people more services—some of of them rather humble in nature. He protected from thievery their pear trees and their eggs (Dayexian 1983: 2a, 2b–3a), for instance. He also arranged marriages between young men and women, and got so busy with matchmaking that he had to advertise for assistants: any human being who would help join a boy and a girl in matrimony without seeking gifts from their parents could become a pettier *tudi* after death. This is why, the story explains, there are *tudi* gods everywhere in China (Dayexian 1983: 7a). According to a legend from another town in Hubei, the *tudi* even found a mate for a widow. So officious he was (Wan 1986: 47–49)!

Occasionally, even a *tudi* may play an important role. When Zhu Hongwu, the first Ming dynasty emperor and a favorite character of Chinese yarnspinners, was still a farm hand or a monk, the *tudi* was responsible for shielding his future majesty from harm, and saving him from all sorts of scrapes (Dayexian 1983: 4a–5a). But the responsibility was taken over by higher-class gods as Zhu rose to positions of greater influence. In their prior existence as men, *tudi* gods could have been heroes who fought the national enemy, or a delinquent dragon (Dayexian 1983: 7b–8a, 8a–b) to no avail. But he could also have been a kind-hearted old man who tried to protect his property from a thief. When a prowler arrived at night to steal his pears, he begged the latter to spare him but was murdered instead (Dayexian 1983: 1a–2b). Sometimes, though, he could be quite shrewd like some peasants. He avoided antagonizing earthlings who came to pray for different kinds of weather by giving each a little of what he wanted (Dayexian 1983: 9a; cf. Ting 1978: 236, type 1830*). He could even be foolish or greedy like some of his admirers. One *tudi* believed that he could cure the sore on his buttocks by warming and basking them in the sun, as a peasant might do to a piece of pickled meat. Earthlings found him in this embarrassing posture, and denounced him as an impostor (Dayexian 1983: 3b). Another wished to taste fowls and stole a hen. The Household God reported the larceny to the Jade Emperor, who sent the Thunder God to punish him. As a result, he not only lost the hen, but had to pay for the pots broken by the Thunder God (Dayexian 1983: 5b). At any rate, he has nothing to do with lofty, exalted virtues. Celibacy is not his cup of tea, and he must be enshrined together with his wife. Of all the deities in Chinese folk religion, the *tudi* is the only one that is almost always accompanied by his spouse (Dayexian 1983: 6a). According to two jokes recorded in Fujian province, Grandma Tudi is often more than a match for Grandpa Tudi; she ties him to her apron string. In a story recorded in the Republican period, she prevented him from re-

distributing wealth on earth and was therefore hated by poor men (Xie 1973: 130–134). According to another, she drove him out from their home one day and would not take him back until he made abject apologies (Lin 1939: 155–157). Still another, also from Fujian, says though that she misdirected her charity and gave away silver to young hoodlums who killed one another in the manner of AT763. Consequently, the shrine in that county became the only one in China that did not display her statue (Hu 1986: 49–50). The *tudi* is thus endowed by the Chinese peasants with one of the general weaknesses (if it is a weakness) of Chinese men of all walks of life—uxoriousness.

This slender collection of twelve stories is in short a joy to read. Chinese folk religion—religious beliefs and stories that are outside the pale of either Buddhism or Taoism—has scarcely been surveyed. The other gods in the hierarchy—such as the Jade Emperor and his court, the gods of literature, wealth, weather, etc.,—all need further study. The *tudi*, who partakes of the earthiness, the sentimentalism, the humility, the humor, the pragmatism, the shrewdness, the love of family life, and other characteristics of the peasantry (presumably the most important class in China) should have received more attention at least from the folklorists. This volume, however, is to my knowledge the first and only collection of its kind in existence. Since there must be many other myths and legends about the same god in China that have never been brought to light, I sincerely hope that more such collections will be on their way for the good of folklore as well as other related disciplines.

Folk Poetry, Proverbs

Three mimeographed works contain folk poetry. Ke Xiaojie's *Minjian geyaoji*, as its title suggests, consists entirely in rhymes. *Jiating minjian wenxueji* and *Zhang Fengmin minjian wenxue zuopinxuan* both contain more poetry than prose. A great deal of propaganda was once published in China in the name of folk poetry, especially during the Great Leap Forward Movement of 1958—a type of abuse that has been soundly criticized both within and without China. I do not know folk poetry well, and cannot say how much folk poetry printed in China during the last few years may be genuine. The rhymes in these three works, one must admit, are almost completly a-political. Ke Xiaojie's volume includes a child's defiant song to Japanese invaders—no surprise at all in view of the bitter struggles for the province during the Sino-Japanese War of 1937–1945 (Ke 1985b: 13–14). Another shows a widow's gratitude to the Chinese Communist Party, again hazardous to dismiss as fake because many young widows in the rural areas in China were not allowed to lead an active life or be remarried until after the change of the regime

(Ke 1985b: 45). In Zhang Fengmin's collection, a woman praises the Party for freeing her from the custom of foot-binding and a girl urges her sweetheart not to believe in superstition (Zhang Fengmin 1985: 12–13, 22). Otherwise, the contents of these volumes are all love songs, traditional complaints by women, children's rhymes, tongue-twisters, etc., that must have circulated for generations. From the professional point of view, Ke Xiaojie's work is more useful: it furnishes simple bibliographic data, explains dialectal terms and phrases at the end of many entries, and describes in detail some children's games (Ke 1985b: 9–11, 15). It also gives the variant of one folk poem (Ke 1985b: 30–35).

The same author's *Jinji yaoyen xuanji* contains over one hundred proverbs concerning trade and commerce, a preface, and two short essays. In his preface, he points out the uniqueness of his attempt, and declares:

> These rhymes and proverbs sum up [our] people's experiences in their economic life, and crystalize folk wisdom. They [may] hold a mirror to [our] nation's modernization, and serve as references for the study of economics.

His two essays are designed to explain two of the proverbs in the collection. One of them, " sell in Hangzhou the wares you bought in Suzhou; profit is not so essential as speed," he points out, emphasizes the importance of making quick transactions rather than holding on to the merchandise and waiting for a chance for higher profit. Hangzhou is very close to Suzhou and a traveling salesman must always think of ready cash. " Up in the hills, fish is expensive and so is shrimp " shows the relations between price and value, and supply and demand. Many proverbs in the booklet reflect the experiences of both consumers and investors: " High-quality merchandise is not cheap; cheap merchandise is not of high quality," " any merchandise that pleases the owner is good [to him]," " compare the prices for the same ware in three [different] stores and you cannot be wrong," " when banknotes fly all around in the air, poor people go hungry," " you are after the interest [he offers]; he is after your principal." The majority of the adages, though, are for the trader: " Do not carry the green vegetables a thousand *li*," " buy and sell by market conditions; morning price changes by evening," " goods are precious where they are rare," " do not go again to the same place where you have made big profits," " money is to be spent [as] water is to flow," " to save a small amount, [you] lose a big sum," " rude in language, slow in business," " treat people with courtesy, customers will come [to you]," " speed in getting information brings profit." Many of these proverbs, Ke points out, reflect traditional conditions and views.

Some are products of the modern society, such as those stressing the importance of economic news (Ke 1985a: 4).

The above volume richly deserves the attention of folklorists. To my knowledge, China is rife with adages on the same subject, but Ke's work is the first and only effort at a systematic investigation of such sayings. In spite of the contempt for capitalistic virtues and the downgrading of conventional standards once inculcated by the government, the common folks in China have evidently remained at heart very much the same. The enterprising spirit and the shrewdness displayed recently by Chinese peasants, which have enabled them to develop rural economy so very rapidly in a few years, suggests the same.[4] Daye is one of the six principal centers in China for copper and iron mining. It is also located in one of China's richest agricultural areas. The total sum of industrial and agricultural production, it claims, increased eight times between 1949 and 1983, 44 percent of the increase occurring between 1978 and 1983. The county now houses not only many 10,000-yuan a year families, but also a number of 100,000-yuan families (Zhonggong 1985: 1–8).

In a booming county with so many peasants learning how to create wealth, the popularity of adages of this type, whether new or old, can easily be understood. *Jingji yaoyan xuanji*, however, has appeared also in only 50 copies. One reason for the limited supply is of course the cost factor. Of the slender volumes under discussion, only *Daye minjian chuanshuo gushiji* (perhaps also *Tudi pusa di gushi*) was printed with county government funds. The others were, according to Zhu Zhenshan (Zhu Zhenshan 1986), all financed by the authors themselves. Even in cases where the editor is given as a government office, such as *Siguzha fengqing*, the cost was actually borne by an individual. Paper and printing were very expensive in China in 1985, as they still are. All the authors and editors receive very low income by Western standards. They did what they did entirely for personal satisfaction—some to entertain themselves and some to please friends and relatives, as Zhu has pointed out. Another, more decisive reason is the Chinese policy of "internal reference." According to this regulation, unless a publication is regarded by the authorities to be acceptable to the public, it may be circulated in certain circles within China, but not mailed, marketed, or carried abroad. This practice, which was started in the earlier days when the People's Republic was a closed society and the desire to keep everything under wrap was inordinately strong, unfortunately still remains in effect. In the field of folk literature, it frequently prevents much of China's best, which reflects most accurately the tradition, style, and life of the people, from reaching readers elsewhere. The majority

of the folkloristic publications from Daye are evidently ruled as fit only for internal reference. In a letter to my wife, for instance, Ke Xiaojie calls his works *ziliaoji* 資料集 (collections of data). As a result, few, if any, folklorists in other parts of China have had a chance to read these collections.

Folk Collections: Their Significance and Problems

Finally, a word is due about the collectors. I never met them, but Professor Liu Shaohua, who talked to them in the meetings at Daye in September 1985, told me that they had all received some junior high school education. If they were middle-aged or older, they could have been sent to the countryside prior to 1976 as "young intellectuals" to help the peasants or to be "re-educated." Among the three whose names are on the title pages—Ke Xiaojie, Zhang Fengmin, and Guo Lanying—two are evidently not yet thirty and may have been local youths with a little more school learning than the average. The level of literacy varies greatly now in Chinese rural areas, but Daye, one of China's most affluent areas, is well provided with schools. Some education in the junior high, therefore, is not very unusual. According to Zhu Zhenshan, all the recorders in question are by law indisputably *nongmin* 農民, or peasants, because their residences are registered as rural. A few of them may be temporary government employees. For instance, Zhang Fengmin has a job in the local public library, and Ke Xiaojie works for the County Food Bureau. Zhu Zhenshan has pointed out, though, that all peasants, even those who are temporarily on the government payroll, are still classified officially as peasants. This definition is evidently accepted all over China. A recent article on peasant paintings in *People's Daily* (Zhang Da 1986: 2) also gives profession and residence as criteria for the classification of the population. The title of the report by the Liaison Section of the China Society for the Study of Folk Literature and Art quoted earlier in this article (Zhongguo 1985) is therefore correct: a number of people classified as peasants in Daye have been recording folklore and publishing it at their own expense. With some encouragment from the local Cultural Bureau and perhaps also some suggestions from enthusiasts for folklore, folk literature in Daye has been "run" by the folk.

General participation by the common people in folklore work of course boosts the confidence and prestige of the leadership in Beijing without straining their budget. Their hopes for similar activities in other parts of the country, however, may not have become realized yet. I have heard of a certain county in Hebei following Daye's example and some *nongmin* elsewhere planning publications in folklore, but have

not yet received any documentary evidence. The dream of peasants taking over folkloristic activities throughout the country is still far from realization.

The achievement in Daye is likely to arouse different responses among folklorists in other parts of the world. Some may see in it gross interference by unprepared amateurs, pointing out that oral records without tapes may not be reliable. Many others may read this article with amazement. Plans for involving the common people have not worked out too well elsewhere. American experts have also hoped " that private citizens should provide the initiative, the talent, and the continuing efforts to assist folklorists to reach the goals . . . . In practice, matters have not turned out quite so neatly " (Dorson 1982: 100). Certainly the reason for soliciting public support in America is very different from that in China. To my knowledge, no American folklorist has ever expressed the view that folkloristic activities should ultimately be carried on principally or solely by the folk. The enthusiasm and generosity shown by this group of people in Daye must nevertheless be recognized as very unusual, if not unprecedented.

The key to the understanding of this rare phenomenon lies, in my opinion, in the unique way in which the Chinese economy has developed since 1978. Instead of leaving en masse for the cities and precipitating such sad scenes of rural decay as described by Goldsmith (e.g., " The Deserted Village"), Wordsworth (e.g., " Michael "), Hardy (e.g., passages in chapters 14, 43, 47, 48, 51 of *Tess of the D'Ubervilles*), most Chinese peasants have stayed in their villages, even though they may be engaged in manufacturing, mining, transportation, and commerce. Without having to desert their homes and suffer privations, dislocation, and neglect in strange cities, they are learning modernization in their familiar milieu with the same friends and neighbors they have always had. The communal way of life remaining largely the same, traditional folklore, the product of such a way of life, needs not undergo violent disintegration or radical metamorphosis.[5] Ingredients of their age-old culture which contradict modern science and society—such as some superstitions and obsolete customs—are certainly losing their grip and kept only by the older people. Other ingredients—especially those designed primarily for entertainment and education of permanent values —such as tales, legends, jokes, nursery rhymes and proverbs—may even become more popular as the peasants have now more leisure, and are in closer contact with intellectuals in the cities. As I have pointed out earlier, the prefaces of some works cited in this article have acknowledged the encouragement of professional societies and sympathetic intellectuals. On top of the above reasons looms of course the pride in and love of their

own heritage, so characteristic of the Chinese people. By Western standards, even the " peasant specialists " of Daye are no better than paupers; yet they gladly finance numerous cultural events, including the publication of folk literature. Some of their productions are of high quality. Two—*Tudi pusa di gushi* and *Jingji yaoyan xuanji*—broke new ground.

While it is impossible to predict the future, how far the movement described in this paper will proceed depends clearly on the development of the Chinese economy. The longer the peasants can remain in their familiar circumstances while enjoying the benefits of modernization, the better will be the chance for this movement to grow and spread. Yet, no matter how enthusiastic the common people will become, they will need the instruction of the professionals on how to record accurately, what are the theories circulating in the world, and so forth. Unfortunately, folklore is still a very weak field in China. Few folklorists, whether academic or public, have received proper training. Those that have the background and wish to do research are severely handicapped by the shortage of necessary tools, because Chinese libraries have been ransacked and depleted by self-righteous radicals during the Cultural Revolution. Besides, the national organ, China Society for the Study of Folk Literature and Art, is largely under the thumb of the Union of Writers and Artists, which is controlled by people who have little knowledge of, or respect for, folk culture.

China has a very important position in our discipline. It passed through a long, long period of what David Bidney called " critical, prescientific culture " (Bidney 1953: 293–326), presumably highly favorable to the growth of verbal folklore. It has also the longest, uninterrupted written tradition, possessing thus the most extensive records of folk narratives, customs, and beliefs. Such a unique heritage deserves extraordinary attention to investigation, preservation, and research. Before aid from private sources can become a substantial factor, it is earnestly hoped that the Chinese government will finance folkloristic studies more adequately, realize that the study of folklore is an independent discipline, and approve the introduction of more courses in folklore in Chinese universities.

NOTES

1. In this article, the term " folk " (*minjian* 民間 in Chinese) is used in its traditional sense of " belonging or pertaining to the peasantry or people with a peasant background." The modern American definition of folk as any somewhat isolated, distinctive group of people was unknown in China as late as 1980, when this writer lectured on the contemporary American approach in Beijing and some other cities.

2. *Zhengli* 整理. A Chinese term for which there is no exact equivalent in Eng-

lish. Among Chinese folklorists, its interpretation has varied from adding quotation marks and touching up to much more serious tempering. Mr. Jia Zhi, Vice President of the China Society of the Study of Folk Literature and Art in Beijing whose name is often associated with this term, is preparing a detailed exposition of the do's and don't's which this term signifies.

3. *Zhuayehu* 專業戶. A term denoting a peasant (and sometimes also his whole family) concentrating on another job than grain production (e.g., raising chickens or fish, transporting goods in rural areas, weaving baskets, etc.). This term is now widely used in China.

4. R. David Arkush's "If man works hard, the land will not be lazy" draws examples from Chinese proverbs to show the enterpreneurial spirit of Chinese peasants. Most of the examples it quotes, however, are not concerned directly with commerce or economic problems (Arkush 1984).

5. For a good description of the disintegration of a folk culture in the United States, see Herbert Passin and John W. Bennett, 1965. Certainly many inhabitants of rural areas in China, like rural residents in other lands, are not aware of the perils and inconveniences of city living, but wish to move to the large urban centers. However, the Chinese government is making migration from the countryside to cities difficult and slow.

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