

The Expansion of Peasant Rationality: An Analysis of the Creators of the “China Miracle”^{*}—Challenging Existing Theories and Proposing New Analytical Approaches

Xu Yong

Political Science Institute, Huazhong Normal University

在中国，农民占多数，长期以来农民被视为传统保守的力量。长期日常农业生产方式下形成的农民理性，在农业社会内部的功效是有限的，主要是生存理性。而这种理性以其惯性进入工商业社会后会形成扩张势态，产生一种农民理性与工业社会优势结合的“叠加优势”，释放出传统农业社会和现代工商业社会都未有的巨大能量。要理解“中国奇迹”，必须理解中国农民；要理解农民，必须理解农民理性。以农民理性中的关键性词语来说明农民理性扩张是如何造就“中国奇迹”的，需要跳出传统与现代二元对立的思维定式，高度重视社会变革中的民性民情民意。

关键词：农民理性 中国奇迹 创造主体

The peasants, the majority of China's population, have always been seen as a traditional and conservative force. Formed over centuries of daily rural production activities, peasant rationality had limited efficacy within rural society and mainly functioned as a survival rationality. As rural society was transformed into industrial and commercial society, peasant rationality moved into the new society through inertia and expanded there. By combining with the advantages of the new society, it produced a kind of “superimposed advantage” that released enormous power unprecedented in both traditional rural society and modern industrial and commercial society. To comprehend the “China Miracle,” we must first understand the Chinese peasant. Similarly, to understand the peasants, we must first apprehend peasant rationality. To illustrate how the expansion of peasant rationality helped to create the “China Miracle,” it is imperative to discard the formula of tradition vs. modernity and to stress the character, attitudes and views of ordinary people in the process of social transformation.

Keywords: peasant rationality, China Miracle, creator

* This article has received funding support from the “Changjiang Scholars Award Program” of the Ministry of Education.

As early as in 1994, in their book *The China Miracle: Development Strategy and Economic Reform*, Justin Yifu Lin and other scholars put forward the famous theory of “comparative advantage” from the perspective of new institutionalism.¹ In the twenty-first century, and especially in the last few years, more discussion has followed.² Due to China’s rapid economic development and relative political stability, the “China Miracle” and such extensions as the “China Model,” “China Experience” and “China Road” became the topic of hot debate, with different viewpoints and opinions coming thick and fast. While they are valuable, these viewpoints and opinions all take the institutionalist approach and ignore the question of “Who is the main body of historical creation?” The “China Miracle” was created by the Chinese people, and peasants are the main body of the Chinese people. The “China Miracle,” “China Model,” “China Experience,” “China Road” and other China-related viewpoints not only reflect an inconceivable socio-economic phenomenon but also put forward a major unforeseen question: the “China Miracle” was created by the Chinese, most of whom were peasants; how could a country of tradition-bound peasants create such a miracle in such a short time? To discuss the “China Miracle,” we must talk about the Chinese; and to discuss the Chinese character, we must take into account the character of the Chinese peasant. This article seeks to penetrate below the social and historical surface to analyze the emergence and development of the “China Miracle” from the perspective of man, the creator.

I. Challenging Traditional Classical Theory and Setting Up a New Explanatory Framework

No matter what our views are, from the point of view of academic research, two questions need to be answered if we are to explain the “China Miracle”: who created the miracle, and when? These questions are so challenging that traditional classical theory is unable to provide the answers.

Undoubtedly, the “China Miracle” and China’s modern development occurred in the course of China’s transformation from a traditional agrarian society to a modern industrial and commercial society. In the social sciences, the classical dichotomy between tradition and modernity has been quite widespread. This theory was developed by Weber in the early twentieth century as Western industrial society was being set up. In terms of the development of the social sciences, Weber was a classic representative of social taxonomy: he divided

1 Justin Yifu Lin, Cai Fang and Li Zhou, *The China Miracle: Development Strategy and Economic Reform*.

2 On July 1, 2009, the day it started publication, *Chinese Social Sciences Today* devoted four pages to discussing the relevant issues. See Tong Li, “The China Road: Global Vision and Historical Dimension” and “Ten Scholars Comment on the China Road”. In 2009, the journal *Zhongguo Shehui Kexue* published in the fifth issue of the year a series of articles under the title “The China Road in the Global Vision: from 1949 to 2009.”

societies into traditional and modern rational, with charismatic society between the two being transitional and irregular.³ Thereafter traditional was considered backward and modern advanced. This belief became the last word in the social sciences and even an unassailable ideology. Agrarian society was traditional society, so naturally the peasants were backward factors. They gave no impetus to progress and were simply a passive force wedded to tradition. Therefore, in the first half of the twentieth century, the peasants, as representatives of traditional and conservative forces, did not get much attention from sociologists.

However, to the surprise of sociologists all over the world, it was the “conservative” peasants who underpinned the emergence of the newly rising countries; and the main problem these countries faced remained peasant poverty. Then, from the 1960s and 1970s on, traditional peasants were brought into the sphere of research in the social sciences and what we call “the ten glorious years of peasant studies” began. Some scholars even compared the significance of the unprecedented development of this field to the discovery of Newton’s First Law.⁴ Though much more attention was given to peasants, their role was still underestimated. Compared with his predecessors, Samuel Huntington, the famous U.S. scholar of politics who specialized in the transition from traditional to modern society, gave a more positive assessment of the peasants’ historical position and function. But he simply considered them as a kind of stabilizing force and believed that “The countryside plays the critical role of pendulum” and “The role of the countryside is variable: it is either the source of stability or the source of revolution.”⁵ Yet he said little about their role in post-revolutionary economic development. Among major Western figures in sociology, it was Barrington Moore who ascribed the most importance to the peasants’ role. He broke through the traditional Western theoretical model of the dichotomy between tradition and modernity, and in particular found that “at the historical juncture of traditional and the modern civilization the large number of class factors left over by the disintegrated traditional society will produce powerful impacts on the making of history in the future.”⁶ Therefore he gave his masterpiece, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, the subtitle of *Lord and Peasant in the Making of Modern World*. Moore was fully aware of peasants’ revolutionary function and stressed, “The process of modernization begins with peasant revolutions that fail. It culminates during the twentieth century with peasant revolutions that succeed. No longer is it possible to take seriously the view that the peasant is an “object of history,” a form of social life over which historical changes pass but which contributes nothing to the impetus of these changes.” However, he

3 This social taxonomy is very popular in the West. Based on Weber’s classification, other scholars in the social sciences developed their own theories, such as Durkheim’s “mechanical solidarity” and “organic solidarity,” Henry Sumner Maine’s “status society” and “contract society,” Tönnies’ “Gemeinschaft” and “Gesellschaft,” Redfield’s “folk society” and “urban society,” and so on.

4 See the general preface of *Peasant Studies Series*, quoted from Joel S. Migdal, *Peasants, Politics and Revolution: Pressures toward Political and Social Change in the Third World*, p. 2.

5 Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, pp. 266-267.

6 Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, p. 2.

held an extremely negative attitude toward peasants' role in post-revolutionary economic construction. He said, "The peasants have provided the dynamite to bring down the old building. To the subsequent work of reconstruction they have brought nothing."⁷

Naturally, the classical theories mentioned above cannot explain the "China Miracle," which took place in a very traditional country with the world's longest history of agrarian civilization and its largest agricultural population. Up to the 1990s, Chinese peasants still made up two fifths of the world's total agricultural population. The family is the basic social unit in rural China and Chinese peasants are relatively independent small-scale producers whose individual strength is quite weak. As general theory sees it, in such a country, strong political mobilization could ignite a powerful revolution that turned the country upside down, but an economic development miracle would be hard to achieve due to the peasants' inherent inertia or conservatism. However, this theory was proved wrong when the "China Miracle" caught the eyes of the world. In 1978 when China launched reform and opening up, over eighty percent of its population was rural or purely peasant. Peasants are the main body in the creation of the "China Miracle" and it is ridiculous to talk about the "China Miracle" without mentioning them, as if it had descended from the heavens as a gift of the gods. We cannot discuss social and economic development without relating them to man, the main force in the world. Similarly, we cannot analyze China without considering the role of the peasants. The character of the Chinese peasant is closely connected with the character of China, and if we want to understand the "China Miracle" we must first understand the Chinese peasant. To do so, we must break through the old model of the dichotomy between tradition and modernity and adopt a new theoretical framework.

Though Moore underestimated their post-revolutionary role, the attention he gave to the peasants, who were at the historical juncture of traditional and the modern civilization, was quite thought-provoking. If we relate the "China Miracle" to the peasants, we must first study the peasants and their activities. This article aims at setting up a roadmap of the expansion of peasant rationality that occurred at the time when traditional and modern civilization met.

The first necessity, then, is to answer the question: Who are the peasants? Generally, peasants are defined as those engaged in agricultural activities. But in China, a country with a long history of agrarian civilization and a very short period of industrial civilization, people engaged in non-agrarian activities mostly came from the countryside too. In fact, very few Chinese families engaged in non-agricultural pursuits for as much as three generations. This explains why the Chinese, including national leaders, are still saturated with or deeply influenced by peasant consciousness and peasant characteristics. Therefore, the "peasants" mentioned in this article refers not only to those who participate in agricultural production but also to those who still have peasant consciousness.

As the main body of society, peasants must necessarily have their own rationality. Of course, this was a hotly debated topic in peasant studies in the 1960s and 1970s. The debates

7 *Ibid.*, pp. 368, 389.

led to sharply opposed viewpoints, such as the “rational peasant,” the “moral peasant” and so on.⁸ One reason for the conflict was the varying definitions of rationality put forward in traditional classical theory. The classical economist Adam Smith put forward the hypothesis of “economic man,” which confined economic rationality to those who make a profit at the least possible cost. Weber further added “calculation” as a criterion of economic rationality. Subsequent controversy over peasant rationality all started here. Though “economic rationality” is important as an analytical concept, it is still limited because rationality is essentially a historical concept. Rationality, a kind of subjective consciousness, comes from specific production models and environments and is a subjective reflection of the objective world. Marx held that “Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc.—real, active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the interaction corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms.”⁹ The rationality of “economic man” is a product of the economic environment of the capitalist market, and is neither inborn nor eternal. Whether from their character as the main body of society or from the perspective of their long history, peasants definitely possess their own rationality. Over centuries of agricultural work, they developed unique consciousness, attitudes and views, which were rational and effective in given circumstances.¹⁰ Rationality is more than a reflection of the objective world, because, once formed, it acquires its own subjectivity or mental inertia. Though environments change, consciousness, deeply rooted in the structure of social psychology, will continue to dominate behavior as a kind of cultural gene. This phenomenon, named “habitus,” has drawn increasing attention from cultural anthropology in recent years. The longer the history, the more deeply-rooted the habitus. This is what is meant by “The past foretells the future and experience dominates choice.” In the case of China, its agrarian traditions, accumulated over several thousand years, have had a great influence not only on peasant behavior but also on that of other Chinese. Therefore, what we call peasant rationality refers to peasants’ consciousness, attitudes and views formed during millennia of agricultural production; it derives from both personal sensory experience and the long accumulation of tradition.

Rationality controls human behavior, though its scope and effectiveness vary. It is subject to environmental constraints; when the environment changes, people in the new environment act in accordance with inertial rationality. In such a case their rationality may release much more power than it could in the old environment, making possible the expansion of rationality. The expansion of rationality refers to a situation where rationality formed in one specific

8 See the general preface of *Peasant Studies Series*, quoted from Joel S. Migdal, *Peasants, Politics and Revolution: Pressures toward Political and Social Change in the Third World*, p. 2.

9 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “The German Ideology,” p. 72.

10 Generally, reasonability and efficacy are the two major elements of rationality. See Hu Rong, *Rational Choice and System Implementation: A Case Study of Village Committee Elections in China’s Rural Areas*, p. 29. Seen from the macro point of view, rationality is nothing but man’s ability to choose his own behavior. His choice is constrained by certain historical conditions. In other words, to be rational is to make rational choices of behavior under certain conditions so as to maximize profit.

field extends into another and expands its force. Each rationality is the outcome of a specific society. Each society goes through the life cycle of emergence, growth, development and decline, a cycle controlled by social cost.¹¹ The more mature a society, the higher its social operating cost and the lower its vitality. So newly emerging societies tend to be the most vigorous and mature societies tend to have diminished vitality. When a rational inertia formed in one social environment is introduced into another society, its potential may be activated and a new and unique efficacy created, forming what we call a “superimposed advantage” or explosive mutation¹² that achieves the expansion of that rationality. Such superimposition and expansion are especially striking at the juncture of two civilizations. If the merchant and industrial capital that originated in the West had not spread across the world and expanded to the colonies, their capitalist rationality would not have been realized, nor would the expansion of early urban mercantile ethnics. Mercantile ethics played a very important role in the West’s shift from an agrarian to an industrial and commercial society, forming what Weber referred to as the spirit of capitalism. If we say that it was merchants who changed the Western world, then we can say it was peasants who changed China.¹³ They guaranteed the success of China’s twentieth century revolution and reform and opening up and created the “China Miracle.”

We have answered the question of who created the “China Miracle”; at the same time, we must answer the question of when they did so. How could the same peasants with the same peasant rationality, who had had very little influence over China’s long history, have had such a great effect over the last thirty years? This is due to the changed environment. Domestically, a great transformation was under way from traditional agrarian society to modern industrial and commercial society under the impetus of reform and opening up. Internationally, a dramatic change was proceeding, with increasing social costs and diminishing vitality in the developed countries and rapidly growing strength in the newly emerging countries. China’s reform and opening up represented an adjustment not only to internal social changes but also to global structural changes. Before reform and opening up, China was mainly an agrarian country. At the time, peasant rationality, suited to agrarian society and of limited efficacy, was utilized for the purpose of survival and was in fact a kind of survival rationality. “In a unitary economy, if land ownership is not concentrated, there is little difference in the incomes of peasant households; that is, we see a state of mass poverty.”¹⁴ As China moved

11 Social cost refers to the cost or expenditure needed for or expended on maintaining the normal operation of society.

12 Each civilization has its inherent strong points, generally called its “essence.” The efficacy of these strong points in the framework of the original civilization is however limited. During the transitional period from one civilization to another, the strong points of two civilizations may mingle and form a superimposed advantage, releasing strong forces previously limited by the framework of each civilization.

13 Xu Yong, “Peasants Change China: Grass-roots Society and Creative Politics: Transcending the Classical Model of Peasants’ Political Behaviors.”

14 Shen Hong *et al.*, *Small Peasants in Peripheral Regions: A Micro-level Analysis of Impoverishment in China*, p. 25.

toward becoming an industrial and commercial society after reform and opening up, the dual economy became more marked and, more importantly, became structurally open, allowing peasants to cross the economic structure into non-agricultural areas. For Chinese peasants, industrial and commercial society and its rules, already quite mature in other countries, are still new in all respects. When they burst into or are drawn into this new world, they continue to behave according to a rationality formed in agrarian society. The organic combination of the strong points of both peasant rationality and modern industrial and commercial society releases a tremendous power unprecedented in either traditional agrarian society or modern industrial and commercial society. In this way, a superimposed advantage is created.¹⁵ It is at the historical juncture of the two societies that peasant rationality expands and evolves from survival rationality to development rationality, leading to the creation of the “China Miracle.”

II. How Did the Expansion of Peasant Rationality Create the “China Miracle”?

Peasant rationality refers to the consciousness, attitudes and views that peasants acquired in an environment of millennia of agricultural production. They were acquired not from classical literature but from ordinary life and work. So the peasant rationality referred to in this article is defined as the consciousness, attitudes and views peasants gained through their own experiences and those of their forefathers, most often seen in proverbs and other popular phrases. Some key elements of peasant rationality are listed below to illustrate how its expansion created the “China Miracle.”

1. *Hard work*

The characteristics and methods of agricultural production determine that hard work is the most basic element in peasant rationality. Highly dependent on natural conditions, agricultural production is controlled by nature and is dependent on the natural environment. Traditional agriculture relies on two major production elements: land and labor. Increased production depends mainly on labor inputs; your income depends on your work, and more work means a better harvest.

However, in traditional agrarian society, hard work does not mean wealth. Firstly, natural conditions are a constraint. Agricultural production is constrained by the seasons and three or four harvests are the most that can be got in one year, so production increases are not limitless. In China, before reform and opening up, the lack of chemical fertilizer commonly

¹⁵ In fact, in summing up the socialist road with Chinese characteristics since reform and opening up, the Communist Party of China (CPC) has already noted the issue of combining the strong points of different civilizations. For example, the Report at the Fifteenth National Congress of the CPC put forward, “It is a great pioneering undertaking to combine socialism with the market economy.” See Jiang Zemin, “Hold High the Great Banner of Deng Xiaoping Theory for All-round Advancement of the Cause of Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics into the Twenty-first Century,” p. 423. Based on the Report delivered at the Seventeenth National Congress of the CPC, Hu Jintao, the General Secretary of the CPC, further proposed “Ten Combinations.”

meant that peasants had to increase their labor input by constantly loosening the soil for a very small or even negligible gain. This kind of labor input kept increasing, but returns did not increase accordingly and sometimes even decreased, a phenomenon that the famous scholar Philip CC Huang calls “economic involution.”¹⁶ Secondly, the dominant relationship in agrarian civilization is that between man and land. Land resources are always limited and agricultural output is hard to increase. With a large population and limited land, the land can barely support the survival of those who work it. To live better than others, people need more land than average; they take over land and improve their own position at the expense of others. When this problem is serious, wars break out, followed by forcible land redistribution in which the rich become poor, as described in the proverb “Wealth doesn’t last more than three generations.” Therefore, traditional agrarian society is a poor but equal society, in which hard work does not ensure wealth and has quite limited efficacy. This is expressed as “diligent poverty” or “efficient poverty.”

In industrial and commercial society, hard work pays well because production is no longer constrained by natural conditions and wealth is limitless. Man can conquer and transform nature to a greater degree. As wealth increases, needs increase equally and are constantly met, so an “industrious revolution”¹⁷ is achieved. As there is more room to increase the total quantity of products, an increase in one’s own wealth does not necessarily mean a decrease in others’ wealth. In other words, in industrial and commercial society, returns to capital and to labor can both increase at the same time. Therefore, the peaceful accumulation of wealth becomes possible and redistribution of wealth by force or war becomes less likely. But in a mature industrial and commercial society, the pace of wealth accumulation is not unlimited. In fact, it is inhibited by regulations about working time and conditions, such as the eight hour day, the two-day weekend, prohibition of child labor, regulated working conditions and so on. All this represents modernity or construction of the rationality of industrial labor. But this modernity means that working time is decreasing but social costs are rising.

Unaware of the above-mentioned modernity, peasants who enter industrial and commercial society keep working as hard as their forefathers did in past centuries. Their hard work releases great energy in the new society and it is hard work, not technology, that has advanced China’s economic competitiveness. The “superimposed advantage” derived from the combination of hard work, a key element of peasant rationality, and the room for wealth increase provided by industrial and commercial society has created the “China Miracle.”

2. Frugality

Production and consumption are the two major components of daily life. In production, peasant rationality takes the form of hard work and in consumption, it takes the form of frugality. Peasants are accustomed to living frugally by reducing consumption to a minimum,

16 Philip CC Huang, *The Peasant Economy and Social Change in North China*.

17 Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe and the Making of the Modern World Economy*, p. 88.

because in their minds the return to agricultural production is limited and they cannot afford to spend too much on consumption. For them, production and consumption are closely connected and lower consumption means higher production. Moreover, agricultural production is greatly influenced by weather and other natural conditions and years of plenty are always followed by lean times. The outside world affords them no insurance, so all they can do is to be self-insured. This gives rise to the rationality of frugality. It takes three forms: first, cutting one's coat to fit one's cloth and avoiding "advance consumption"; second, cutting back on consumption of food and other items to accumulate wealth; third, emphasizing savings so as to be prepared for hard years. In agrarian society, frugality can help peasants survive but it cannot make them rich, since production levels and total wealth are limited and personal savings mean little in terms of wealth accumulation.

Since reform and opening up, Chinese society has been transformed into an industrial and commercial society centered on the market. People's living standards have undoubtedly greatly improved but the peasant rationality of frugality still plays its part. One reason is that being at the primary stage of industrial society, China has not yet set up a high-cost social security system. Peasants, in particular, basically enjoy no social security programs, so they must rely on themselves and live within their means to ensure they can live a normal life. Therefore, making ends meet, consuming appropriately, prioritizing savings, and guarding against future risks are still important principles in their consumption. Consequently, after reform and opening up, China accumulated the world's highest foreign reserves as well as having high internal savings. The Chinese government has made efforts to encourage consumption but people have responded cautiously. They either put money into production, "to make money from money" or, more commonly, bank it to guard against unforeseen emergencies. Unlike the developed West, which is characterized as being high wage, high consumption and low saving, China's economic model is one of low wages, medium consumption and high saving. In 2008, China's internal saving rate was 46 percent, while that of the U.S. was -0.5%.

The rationality of frugality plays a very important role today, especially at a time of sharp economic fluctuations. On the one hand, China can continually increase reproduction through rolling over capital, going from being a capital-poor country to a capital-surplus one, "not short of money." On the other hand, the high savings rate enables both the government and ordinary people to deal with economic crises. When the global financial crisis hit the world, Western countries had a hard time and had to count on their inherited financial monopolies and costly social security systems to save them. But China, with its enormous savings, recovered easily. In fact, China was first to emerge from the financial crisis, partly because it carried out a policy of appropriate consumption and high savings. Frugality, one element of peasant rationality, helped China pile up the largest foreign reserves in the world in only twenty years. The "superimposed advantage" derived from the combination of frugality and the constant economic development of industrial and commercial society created the "China

Miracle.”

3. *Calculation*

It is generally held that merchants are good at calculation. According to Weber, it was calculation that meant that Western countries were the first to become capitalist. In fact, peasants are also good at calculation. Due to their lack of resources and wealth, they have to consider how to minimize their losses and maximize their harvests so that their families can live a normal life. Unlike merchants, peasants in agrarian societies make careful calculations about what to store, not about what to exchange. The goal of their calculation is to survive and “make a living” and its principle is “safety first.” With this kind of rationality, peasants in traditional agrarian society could pass their lives in security but could not get rich easily.

In the West, as industrial and commercial society developed under the impetus of the logic of capital, commercial capital was transformed into industrial capital and then into financial capital, and mercantile calculations of “exchange and make money” reached their maximum extent. The goal of financial capital is to make money with money, and especially to make big money with little money and to make big profits in a short time. Due to economic globalization and the development of information technology, the countries that dominate world finance could take advantage of their financial superiority by over-issuing their currencies, causing excess liquidity. As the result, the virtual economy diverged considerably from the real economy and bubbles appeared, leaving plenty of room for making a fortune. While Western businessmen indulged in the game of “money making money,” China’s honest peasants stepped on to the historical stage and became involved in the global economy, caring not about how much they earned but only about whether there was money to be made. Because of the imperfections and lack of vitality in China’s previous planned economy, many daily necessities were in short supply and this provided a golden opportunity for the development of the private economy, an industrial and commercial economy in which peasants were the main force. However slight the profit, Chinese peasant businessmen were anxious to give it a try. This kind of calculation transcended the economy of “getting by,” so they created much more wealth than before. When Chinese private enterprise started to look to the global market, they found more room for making money because their business of manufacturing daily necessities was already looked down on in developed countries but still beyond the reach of other developing countries. For these ex-peasant private entrepreneurs, something was worth doing as long as there was money to be made. The “superimposed advantage” derived from the combination of the peasants’ rationality of calculation and the extensive room for making money in global markets created the “China Miracle.”

4. *Reciprocity*

It has been said that Chinese peasants are born to be divided, not united. In fact, they are both divided and united. Chinese peasants have a long history of mutual help and cooperation. A single family could not do all the agricultural or household work by itself, especially in the planting and the harvest season, so peasant families would help each other out through labor

exchange and other means. By reciprocity they could obtain mutually balanced benefits. Such reciprocal behavior is more common in daily life.

When they entered industrial and commercial society, peasants did not form a class or acquire class consciousness,¹⁸ nor did they encounter clear class divisions (like those in slave societies) involving contradictions or conflict between two major classes. What class conflicts there were, were diluted by the warm and affectionate human and ethical relationships of the clan and the family. The great twentieth century Chinese scholar, Liang Shuming, once concluded that “Chinese people lack class consciousness; in particular, they are not used to class viewpoints and they do not analyze things from the class aspect.”¹⁹ Cooperation between employer and employee became possible when the peasants’ rationality of reciprocity, with its long history, entered the daily life of industrial and commercial society. It was a triple win: the locals provided the land, foreign capital provided the money, and peasants from elsewhere came to work. Though the bosses made the money, the peasants were still happy because they earned much more than they could at home. After reform and opening up, many factories in coastal areas were called “blood and sweat factories” or sweatshops. The rate of profit on capital investment in China was much higher than in other countries, attracting more and more foreign investment into China, but the frequency and seriousness of labor conflicts in China were much lower than in other countries, even African countries. So while China’s economy was still underdeveloped, the country did not need to pay high social costs or set up its own social security system. The rationality of reciprocity contributed immense energy and competitiveness to China’s economic development. Chinese products are so competitive in the global market that even developed countries with long industrial traditions have to put up protectionist trade barriers. The reason is simple: Chinese products are incredibly cheap. China has been able to take over the world market through cheap products based on cheap labor. The cheap labor depends on labor-capital cooperation, and this in turn depends on the peasant rationality of reciprocity. This kind of cooperation, the coming together of heterogeneous elements, can create increments of wealth. Therefore, the “superimposed advantage” derived from the combination of peasant reciprocity and cheap competitive costs created the “China Miracle.”

5. *Human relationships*

Traditional agrarian society is a society of relatives and friends. Normally people are born, live and die in the same village, so they have their whole lives to build close relationships with clan members and neighbors. Agrarian society is a society of human relationships where emotion sometimes takes the place of law.

The modern Western world began with the rise of the merchant. Being mobile, merchants face a “society of business ties” and a “society of strangers.” Their economic exchanges are

18 Marx had incisive comments about this. He pointed out that peasants lacked class consciousness and were not regarded as a class. See “The 18th Brumaire of Louis Napoleon,” p. 677.

19 Cited from Shan Feng, *Research on Liang Shuming’s Thinking about Social Reconstruction*, p. 209.

mainly sustained by means of contracts and other forms of intermediary. When they have a dispute, they go to a professional lawyer to resolve it. But such intermediaries do not create wealth directly but live on the money paid by clients. Therefore, the more mature industrial and commercial society becomes, the higher the cost of social interaction.

When they burst into industrial and commercial society, Chinese peasants were armed with little commercial rationality, but they did have the rationality of human relationships. At the beginning, when they left home and looked for work elsewhere, they were labeled as transients who should be contained, and society did not even set up employment agencies for them. When such agencies were later set up, most were profit-making operations and even fraudulent. In such circumstances, peasants could only trust their countrymen, relatives and friends when they looked for work. In fact, hundreds of millions of Chinese peasants were led out of their villages by relatives and neighbors. Due to the rationality of human relationships, the cost of social interaction was cut sharply and the wealth effect expanded. Douglass North, founder of the new institutionalism, provides a reasoned evaluation of informal institutions like human relations, saying that “the past informal ways for solving problems of exchange are brought up now, making these informal restraints an important source of sustained and continuous social changes.”²⁰ If over a hundred million Chinese migrant workers all needed employment agencies to find jobs, the number of agencies and the fees charged would be huge. If Chinese migrant workers and private enterprises sought legal solutions whenever they ran into trouble, their legal costs would be enormous. The cost of such employment and legal agencies would be added to the total social cost, decreasing the total competitiveness of society. In terms of social interaction, human relationships were actually the most important rationality for peasants in the unknown industrial and commercial society. With the help of relatives or neighbors, they left home and found appropriate jobs or even began their own businesses. In this way, external risks and costs were effectively reduced or avoided, so their returns were better. At the same time, the relationship between the helped and the helper was further strengthened. It is no exaggeration to say that human relationships have functioned as a booster and lubricant for China’s economic development since reform and opening up. On the one hand, modern industrial and commercial society has developed rapidly; on the other, traditional human relationships between classmates, countrymen, clan members etc. have also grown quickly. This was an inevitable result of the peasants’ economic environment and it was also their own rational choice. In an environment where external risks and costs were high, peasants counted on human relationships to expand social interaction, avoid risks, reduce costs and improve returns. The human relationships that enabled them to reduce costs and risks and the room for social interaction and money-making that industrial and commercial society provided were superimposed to create the “China Miracle.”

20 Douglass C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*, p. 51.

6. *Love of learning*

Agrarian society was also a society of learning. On entering industrial and commercial society, peasants found themselves in a brand new world and had to learn survival skills. They opened their minds to all the new things. At the same time, their studies were marked by peasant rationality: they chose what to learn and how according to their own needs. At first, their learning was imitative. They did not quite understand the skills but tried to “draw a dipper with a gourd as a model,” spending just a little money to grasp skills that had cost others a lot to learn. Next, they were selective in learning. For them, learning was for practical purposes, not for dreams. They learned others’ skills because they could use them for a better life and did not simply copy them wholesale. After that, they became creative in learning. They would, according to their needs and the trends of social development, add to and improve on what they had learned so as to create new things. Their learning was not pure copying; in fact the pupils surpassed their teachers. Chinese emigrants who survived and succeeded in strange and distant lands relied on nothing but their Chinese peasant-style hard work and love of learning. In the U.S., Chinese Americans succeed academically at a far higher rate than any other ethnic group. After China’s reform and opening up, Chinese peasants went out into the world; they owed this to their hard work and love of learning. China’s active and comprehensive opening to the outside world has enabled the peasants to bring the rationality of learning into full play. Justin Yifu Lin and other scholars believe that one important reason for China’s rapid economic development was its “latecomer’s advantages” which enabled it to learn the most advanced technology from other countries, saving a lot in hi-tech development investment.²¹ China’s “superimposed advantage” derived from the combination of the practical rationality of the peasants’ love of learning and the wealth of knowledge of industrial and commercial society created the “China Miracle.”

7. *Pursuit of stability*

In traditional agrarian society, nature is unpredictable, so the peasants’ biggest wish and greatest happiness is security. They pursue stability and fear change. They feel quite secure and satisfied if they are just a little well off. They do not like to rock the boat because they believe security is a blessing. Industrial and commercial society, on the other hand, is full of change. Material desires increase sharply and supply always fails to meet demand. The rapid development of industrial and commercial society is accompanied by turbulence and instability.

In the last thirty years, China has created the “China Miracle” through its rapid economic development and relative political and social stability. This is the core of the “China Model” foreigners have commented on and it also constitutes the “China Mystery,” because foreigners cannot understand how China could have achieved it. In fact, the answer lies in the peasant rationality of pursuing stability and fearing change. In the first thirty years after the founding of the People’s Republic of China, especially after large-scale land reform, the peasants wished

21 Justin Yifu Lin, Cai Fang and Li Zhou, *The China Miracle: Development Strategy and Economic Reform*, p. 16.

for stable lives but the ever-changing policies turned them upside down. In the second thirty years, the years since reform and opening up, the government's rural policies were welcomed by the peasants, who very much needed stable policies. In the 1980s, Deng Xiaoping pointed out on many occasions that the basic policies of China should not change because what peasants worry about and fear the most is policy changes. In 1989, right after the June Fourth Incident, he reiterated that the policies would remain unchanged. In 1992, he indicated with deep feeling, "Why was it that our country could remain stable after the June Fourth Incident? It was precisely because we had carried out the reform and opening up policy, which has promoted economic growth and raised living standards."²² In the 1980s, good policies meant that the peasants' lives improved and their basic needs were met, so they wanted stability to continue. In the 1990s, their burdens intensified and some instability appeared in rural areas. Meanwhile, China's industry, through deepening reform and increasing openness, created a lot more jobs for migrant workers. Able to supplement farm income with industrial work, they had new opportunities. They still hoped for stability and the accompanying opportunities to make money. This explains why, though their burden was heavier in the 1990s, the rural areas remained stable and no crises challenged the basic state system. In the Western world, there were many prophecies about China's collapse, but none came true. The most important reason for this is that as long as the peasants are settled, China will remain stable. Since reform and opening up, China has been promoting changes so that people can become rich, while at the same time the peasant rationality of "being satisfied with being a little well off" has helped the country to remain stable at a time of big social changes. Hu Jintao, the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, summed up China's policies as the three No's (no wavering, no slacking off, no flailing about) in his speech celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of reform and opening up. Specifically, one of China's fundamental national policies since reform and opening up has been development through stability, stabilizing the country by stabilizing the rural areas and peasants first. The "superimposed advantage" derived from the combination of the peasant rationality of pursuing stability and the developmental momentum of industrial and commercial society created the "China Miracle."

8. *Endurance*

When China entered the modern world, it was already a world of great powers, but China was helped by the peasant rationality of endurance. During the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, conditions for China were extremely harsh, so Mao Zedong proposed "protracted war." Due to its backwardness, China could not gain a quick victory. But the country would not fall either, because it was on the side of justice, and in particular, its people had unsurpassed endurance. Then in the three years from the late 1950s to the early 1960s, China experienced very severe economic difficulties. However, thanks to the peasant rationality of endurance, the Chinese people managed to get through. Since China adopted the reform and opening policy, Chinese peasants have entered or been drawn into a totally new

22 Deng Xiaoping, "Excerpts from Talks Given in Wuchang, Shenzhen, Zhuhai and Shanghai," p. 371.

industrial and commercial world. Their fate was unpredictable and conditions were tough, but their spirit of endurance was high. They set foot bravely in the unknown world, trying to change their circumstances and their fate. Some claim that China's reform is "incremental." But actually, in terms of systemic reform and human relationships, these were high-intensity reforms. For example, in the 1980s, China's military was cut by one million. In the 1990s, the reform of state-owned enterprises caused about ten million workers to be laid off or change their status. Such great reforms are unthinkable in other countries, even in ones that have carried out "radical reform." China's successes in these reforms owed much to its people's quality of endurance. The "superimposed advantage" derived from the combination of Chinese peasants' rationality of endurance and the expanding development of industrial and commercial society created the "China Miracle."

III. The Changeability of Peasant Rationality: The Limits and Sustainability of the "China Miracle"

At a transitional point in history, the specific elements of peasant rationality, combined with the advantages of industrial and commercial society, have managed to expand, producing an enormous impact that could not have been achieved in mature agrarian or industrial and commercial societies. However, peasant rationality grew out of a specific environment; its content, form and effects are highly complex, and this means that the "China Miracle" has limits and its sustainability is restricted.

The "China Miracle" has been recognized all over the world. Why did such a miracle take place in China alone? In other words, why has the coexistence of high economic growth and comparative political stability not yet appeared in other countries? One important reason is China's peasant rationality, born of thousands of years of agrarian civilization. This kind of peasant rationality is unique to China and cannot be transplanted or copied; it has helped China to stay a length ahead of India, which has also been enjoying remarkable economic growth. Moore's writings on the role of the peasantry in the different development models of China and India are still stimulating today. The "China Miracle" or the "China Model," "China Experience" and "China Road" that followed it are all specific representations of Chinese characteristics. Therefore it is worthwhile to summarize and analyze these concepts to find out how a miracle that has drawn global attention could be achieved in a country with a long agrarian tradition. However, just as it is inappropriate simply to imitate the "Western Model," "Western Experience" or "Western Road," it is equally inappropriate to copy the "China Model," "China Experience" or "China Road" wholesale, since their influence and impact have limits. Each country should adopt its own road of development suited to its national conditions and public sentiment.

While we give high marks to the role of the expansion of peasant rationality in the creation of the "China Miracle," we must be aware of the price paid for this expansion. It may not be

apparent over the short term, but as time passes the costs paid by the individual and society are becoming evident. Unlike rural work which is simple and natural and less exact in timing and conditions, industrial production is complex and carries unpredictable risks, e.g., work injuries and toxins that are unlikely to appear in agricultural labor. Unceasing repetitive mechanical work makes people part of a machine engaged in hard and monotonous labor; fields like manufacturing, mining and construction, where migrant workers find jobs, involve especially heavy labor and considerable danger. When they enter these production areas, hard-working peasants do not think too much about their working hours and conditions, and their health may very well be affected. As their labor contracts make no provision for work-caused injuries or ill health, they do not obtain their rightful compensation; then not only does the worker suffer, but there is a cost to society. Examples are the “sweatshops” in China’s coastal areas and the frequent mine disasters in Shanxi and other provinces.

The remarkable role that the expansion of peasant rationality played at the transition point between agrarian and industrial civilization will not exist forever, since the environment always changes and with it changes human rationality, a product of the environment. Once the peasants are used to industrial and commercial society, environmental changes will eventually make them change their ideas, attitudes and views. Consequently peasant rationality will stop expanding and begin to contract and the “superimposed advantage” based on the finest elements of the two civilizations will fade away. Firstly, take hard work. The second generation of migrant workers, those who were born in and after the 1980s and have little experience of work in the fields, are more open to industrial rationality and much more fussy in terms of working hours and conditions than their parents. One example is that after many migrant workers lost their jobs and returned to their villages because of the global financial crisis, the Chinese government did everything it could to create new jobs for migrant workers, but young migrant workers cared not only about wages but also about other factors like working hours, working conditions and work location. As the government adopts more worker protection measures, the low labor costs created by the expansion of peasant rationality are hard to maintain. In recent years, largely because of rising labor costs, Chinese GDP growth has been slowing and the government has needed to guarantee a certain growth rate; this is related to ever rising labor costs. Secondly, take frugality. The consumption habits of the new generation of peasants are getting closer to those of urban residents. As the government extends social security coverage to rural areas, peasants are more willing to spend money, and spend boldly. Their savings and propensity to save have begun to fall. This jeopardizes the low wage-high savings model that once contributed so much to China’s economic success. Thirdly, take calculation. Chinese private enterprises are used to making a marginal profit by exporting cheap products. However, as labor costs rise, little room is left for this profit-making model. So in recent years, government officials in China’s coastal areas have been promoting the transformation of enterprises from cheap labor and resource dependence to knowledge and technological innovation. The transformation

has not proved easy, especially when it came to changing people's way of learning from the traditional imitation to modern creativity. Currently, China's acquisition of knowledge is still confined to imitation. Though China has the world's largest number of PhDs and the second largest number of published papers in science and technology, it rarely produces original discoveries. The market economy has boosted the human tendency to look after number one, and the peasant rationality of reciprocity began to change when it encountered the open and ever changing society of the market. Peasants increasingly seek help from social agencies when they run into problems, increasing the social cost accordingly. As the sense of stability acquired from "looking backward" in agrarian society is replaced by a feeling of instability drawn from "horizontal comparisons" in the market economy, people become less willing to put up with undesirable environments, leading in recent years to the social psychology of "picking up the bowl and enjoying the meat; putting down the chopsticks and starting to complain." The result is that the government has had to pay higher social costs to maintain social stability. For example, since 2000, there have been more and more mass incidents in China and the cost of dealing with these incidents has been increasing rapidly. The growth in total social costs will definitely reduce the total competitiveness of the economy. This indicates that the "China Miracle" will change with the times. A "miracle" is a relative concept; if it went on forever, it would not be a miracle.

If we acknowledge that peasant rationality's contraction after a period of expansion is inevitable and even a reflection of social progress, then we need to pay attention to the possibility of a "superimposed disadvantage" created by the expansion of peasant rationality. While the best elements of peasant rationality and industrial and commercial society can together make up a "superimposed advantage," their undesirable elements can also join to make a "superimposed disadvantage." Peasant rationality may change and even go off course, and may join with inherently undesirable factors in industrial and commercial society to yield "superimposed disadvantage."²³ The expansion of peasant rationality not only increased China's national assets but also made a small number of peasants rich. Under the inertia of traditional peasant rationality, these rich peasants, "the affluent first generation," still retain their characteristic hard work and frugality. But their children, "the affluent second generation," have lost these habits; they prefer entertainment to work and consumption to thrift. Stimulated by the consumption values of industrial and commercial society, they even compete to show off their wealth, in, for example, the frequent "speeding on city streets" in Zhejiang in recent years. The old Chinese proverb "Wealth doesn't last more than three generations" is being proved true in a new setting. In terms of learning, after people get rich, pride and complacency or even self-aggrandizement begin to appear. In terms of human relationships, human warmth has been disappearing, to be replaced by interests. For money, people are even ready to swindle their relatives and friends first, as shown in pyramid selling.

23 Any civilization has its inherent fine elements, which are generally called its "essence." Similarly, each has its inherently undesirable elements, the "dross." When one civilization is being replaced by another, the worst elements of the two may join to yield what we call "superimposed disadvantage."

Society pays a high price in cases of “pulling strings,” as in the corrupt collusion between government officials and businessmen. In terms of reciprocity, some overnight millionaires don’t know how to behave in their new station. They are rich but far from generous. They show no respect for labor or ordinary workers and even become the heartless rich, causing social rifts and opposition, fomenting a populist psychology of hating the rich and potentially leading to social conflict and even violent opposition. Mass incidents in recent years have not had a particular direction, being mainly a way of venting people’s dissatisfaction with society. However, if these voices of dissatisfaction do not get an effective answer, they may eventually result in a social explosion. If this happens, the achievements of the “China Miracle” will collapse and the influence of the “China Model,” the “China Experience” and the “China Road” will be greatly reduced.

In the period of transition from a traditional agrarian society to modern industrial and commercial society, peasant rationality expanded. But as society develops, peasant rationality will go through a process of expansion, contraction, decline and metamorphosis. The first thirty years after the reform and opening up policy saw the expansion of peasant rationality. As indicated in the Chinese saying “Everything has its ups and downs,” peasant rationality has now begun to contract. On the one hand, its expansion is not completely over; on the other, its forces have entered the phase of contraction and even decline. Since peasant lifestyles are gradually becoming urbanized, peasant rationality will ultimately be replaced by the rationality of the urban dweller. However, it has lasted for several thousand years and will not disappear easily or quickly. It will definitely be reborn in other forms.

IV. Conclusion

This article, taking peasant rationality as its entry point, has sought to explain the emergence of the “China Miracle” and possible future trends, through the following main viewpoints.

First, we should leave behind the model of a dichotomy between tradition and modernity. From the twentieth century on, China entered an era of transition from traditional agrarian society to modern industrial and commercial society, with modernity as the final goal. Eager to change the status quo, people formed a mental pattern involving a dualistic opposition between tradition and modernity, considering the modernity they sought as the incarnation of all that was sacred, lofty and advanced and tradition as backward, regressive and disposable. But a great revolution, and especially the most thorough land reform in human history, happened in China, the country most steeped in tradition. Great development, and especially a miracle of economic development unparalleled in the world, took place in China, where the population is mostly peasants. Recalling these facts, we must reject the pattern of thought involving a dualistic opposition between tradition and modernity, otherwise we cannot explain why the “China Miracle” happened in a country of peasants. In recent years, while China’s economy developed rapidly on its own unique path, there has been a craze for traditional

Chinese culture and Chinese national learning. People have tried to attribute China's success to its Confucian culture, unique to the East, that is, to traditionalism. One big flaw of this approach is that it cannot explain why in two thousand years of Confucian or agrarian civilization, China never achieved take-off but developed very slowly (as Mao Zedong said). Like the modernist orientation, this traditionalist orientation is still confined to the dualistic framework that opposes tradition to modernity. We have to break down this framework if we wish to provide a scientific explanation and forecast of China's developmental road.

Second, we should attach more importance to various factors and their influence at the transitional points in the development of the forms of civilization. Since the twentieth century, China has been in transition between agrarian and commercial/industrial civilization, a great change unprecedented in history. In such a transition, some factors will have an important or even crucial impact. We are used to paying more attention to the effect of leaders; this is undoubtedly right because the role of a political group led by a great leader in inspiring, mobilizing and organizing the people is critically important for a country where the population is mostly peasants. This explains why Deng Xiaoping believed that without the leadership of Mao Zedong, China might have spent more time groping in the darkness and why Deng himself is so widely admired for his critical role in China's reform and opening up. While we fully recognize leaders' role at such historical turning points, we tend to neglect the role of the mass of the people. However, without the support of ordinary people, no leader can change the world, no matter how great he is. Then who are the mass of the people in China? They are mainly peasants. Peasants are behind every great achievement. The purpose of this article is to prove that the "China Miracle" was not created by some sage or great man but by the "muddled peasants," about whom history is silent. However, peasants, the main body of the Chinese people, are almost invisible in contemporary studies of the "China Miracle," "China Model," "China Experience" and "China Road." It is unrealistic to discuss any miracle, model, experience or road if we do not first talk about the people who created them.

Third, we should pay attention to the factors of culture and character, environment and views of the people in the process of social transition. One reason we neglected the peasants' role is that we over-emphasized the role of institutions. Some people believe that as long as systems are changed under the leadership of a few great men, everything will go as planned. But in fact, it is far from that simple. The system is the shell and culture is the core. No matter how perfect systems are, if there is no consistent culture at the core, the systems will be just a useless empty shell. For many years we have emphasized that China's development must be in accordance with China's national situation, but we never consider culture and character, environment and views of the people as part of our national situation. Actually, they are the living "soft" national situation and are much more active than geography, the economy and other "hard" components of the national situation. Only by basing itself on the character, environment and views of the Chinese people and by meeting the needs of the transition from an agrarian society to an industrial and commercial one could China explore its own

unique and effective road and create the world-famous “China Miracle.” This article tries to explain how the expansion of peasant rationality helped to make the “China Miracle.” More importantly, it tries to illustrate the critical role of culture and character, environment and views of the people, formed over a long history and in the process of historical transition.

Lastly, we should attach more importance to the analytical framework of historical institutionalism. Since the twentieth century, institutional revolution and reform have become important themes in China, so the analytical framework of institutionalism has become very popular. It argues that as long as systems change, everything will change. As a result, the historical factors in the process of institutional change tend to be ignored. According to Marxism, “the world is not to be comprehended as a complex of ready-made things, but as a complex of processes.”²⁴ The world is a historical process, a dynamic process created by man. “History is nothing but the activity of man pursuing his aims.”²⁵ Historical institutionalism stresses that institutional changes are historical processes dominated by man, the subject of history. The effectiveness of institutional change in a specific historical period is largely decided by the role of the people of that period. Currently, articles and books concerning the “China Miracle,” “China Model,” “China Experience” and “China Road” have not given enough attention to the role of man, the creator of history. This is one of the aims of this article.

Notes on Contributor

Xu Yong, Professor of Political Science and Director of the Political Science Institute of Huazhong Normal University. His main research interests are peasants, rural problems and Chinese politics. His representative works include *The Imbalance in Chinese Politics: A Comparative Study of the City and the Countryside* (非均衡的中国政治:城市与乡村比较, Beijing: China Radio and Television Press, 2009); *Rural Governance and Chinese Politics* (乡村治理与中国政治, Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2003) and *The Modern State, Rural Society and Institutional Construction* (现代国家,乡土社会与制度建构, Beijing: China Logistics Press, 2009). Tel: 0086-27-67865189 E-mail: xuyong628@yahoo.com.cn.

References

- Deng, Xiaoping. “Excerpts from Talks Given in Wuchang, Shenzhen, Zhuhai and Shanghai.” In *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, vol. 3. Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 1993.
- Engels, Frederick. “Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy.” In *Selected Works of Marx and Engels*, vol. 1. Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 1995.
- Huang, Philip CC. *The Peasant Economy and Social Change in North China* (华北的小农经济与社会变迁). Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1986.
- Huntington, Samuel P. *Political Order in Changing Societies*. Trans. Wang Guanhua et al. Beijing: Sdx

24 Frederick Engels, “Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy,” p. 244.

25 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, “The Holy Family,” pp. 118-119.

- Joint Publishing Company, 1989.
- Hu, Rong. *Rational Choice and System Implementation: A Case Study of Village Committee Elections in China's Rural Areas* (理性选择与制度实施——中国农村村民委员会选举的个案研究). Shanghai: Shanghai Far East Publishers, 2001.
- Jiang, Zemin. "Hold High the Great Banner of Deng Xiaoping Theory for an All-round Advancement of the Cause of Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics into the Twenty-First Century"(高举邓小平理论伟大旗帜, 把建设中国特色社会主义事业全面推向二十一世纪). In *Selected Important Documents of All the National Congresses and Plenary Sessions of the Central Committees of the CPC since the Fourth Plenary Session of Its Thirteenth Central Committee* (中共十三届四中全会以来历次全国代表大会中央全会重要文件选编). Ed. Party Literature Research Center of the Central Committee of CPC. Beijing: Central Party Literature Press, 2002.
- Lin, Justin Yifu, Cai Fang and Li Zhou. *The China Miracle: Development Strategy and Economic Reform* (中国的奇迹:发展战略与经济改革). Shanghai: Truth and Wisdom Press, SDX Joint Publishing Company and Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1994.
- Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels. "The German Ideology." In *Selected Works of Marx and Engels*, vol. 1. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1995.
- Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. "The 18th Brumaire of Louis Napoleon." In *Selected Works of Marx and Engels*, vol. 1. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1995.
- Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. "The Holy Family." In *Collected Works of Marx and Engels*, vol. 2. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1957.
- Migdal, Joel S. *Peasants, Politics and Revolution: Pressures toward Political and Social Change in the Third World*. Trans. Li Yuqi and Yuan Ning. Beijing: Central Compilation and Translation Press, 1996.
- Moore, Barrington. *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. Trans. Tuo Fu, Zhang Dongdong et al. Beijing: Huaxia Publishing House, 1987.
- North, Douglass C. *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*. Trans. Hang Xing. Shanghai: Sdx Joint Publishing Company, 1994.
- Pomeranz, Kenneth. *The Great Divergence: China, Europe and the Making of the Modern World Economy*. Trans. Shi Jianyun. Nanjing: Jiangsu People's Publishing House, 2003.
- Shan, Feng. *Research on Liang Shuming's Thinking on Social Reconstruction* (梁漱溟社会改造构想研究). Jinan: Shandong University Press, 1996.
- Shen, Hong et al. *The Small Peasantry in Peripheral Regions: A Micro-analysis of Impoverishment in China* (边缘地带的小农——中国贫困化的微观理解). Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1992.
- Xu, Yong. "Peasants Change China: Grass-roots Society and Creative Politics: Transcending the Classical Model of Peasants' Political Behaviors" (农民改变中国:基层社会与创造性政治——对农民政治行为经典模式的超越). *Academic Monthly* (学术月刊), 2009, no. 5.

—Translated by Li Jingfeng from
Zhongguo Shehui Kexue (中国社会科学), 2010, no. 1
 Revised by Sally Borthwick