

All photos presented in this book are snapshots in real situations.

All interviews and peasants' words in this book are original without any adaptation.

These interviews and words are transcriptions from tape records.

Preface

Time is flying, as always

Details embody the reality in art

On the speeches' lies

I raise my camera

To still the history



Chinese peasants are the biggest human group in the world.

They would be my eternal theme as a photographer.

Registering Chinese peasants with my camera is my dream.

This is a dream that I did not fulfill when I was an internship in

a press more than a decade ago. As an individual Chinese

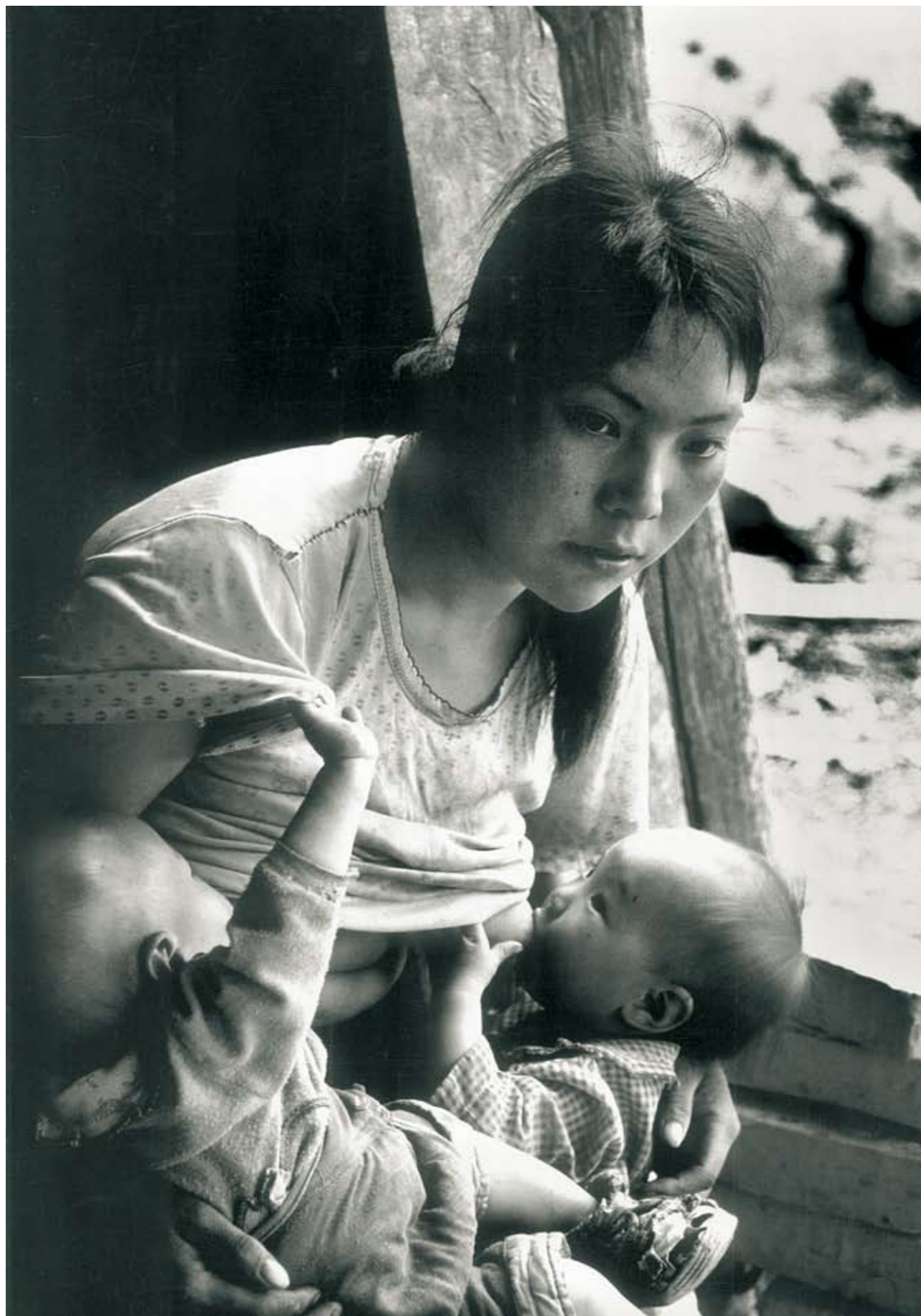
photographer, despite the danger and fatigue, I always feel

lucky and satisfied to spend ten years with the peasants, and to

shoot with my spirit. For this is a mission given by my soul.

For the ten-year period starting from June 1997, I visited and shot 16 backcountries in Sichuan, Chongqing and Jiangsu in China. Without any governmental auspice, and faced with tremendous challenges, I managed to obtain an in-depth contact with the grass-root peasant families. Through chats and communications with them, I managed to record the real life status of these peasants. This project is accomplished all through my own independent observation and with my self-raised fund. From time to time, I was moved and shocked by the events before my camera, and I was also inspired by people in my photo. They made me more determined to work hard to accomplish this project.

Hou Yimin



"My husband has a construction job in Beijing but has earned nothing for the whole year but debt to the Contractor for his accommodation and meals. He has not a single penny to make a call to me. He has fallen ill and needs money to start his way home. I have no money, either...."



His earning for the day, in 50c notes, totals US\$1.2

A Peasant Family's Balance Sheet, 1999

1. Expenditure after the Spring Festival

1) Urea: 95 yuan per sack, 3 sacks added up to RMB285 yuan.

2) Diesel oil for pumping water to the field: RMB1.1 per jin (or half a kilo). 15kilos added up to RMB33.

3) Pesticide: RMB18 yuan per bottle, two bottles added up to RMB36 yuan. Subtotal: RMB354.

2. Expenditure in October for the autumn planting

1) Ploughing: RMB20 yuan per man per day, RMB60 yuan for days

2) Fertilizer: Urea 95 yuan per sack, 3 sacks added up to RMB285 yuan

3) Pesticide: RMB20 yuan per bottle, 2 bottles added up to RMB40 yuan

4) Diesel oil for pumping water to the field: RMB1.2 yuan per jin, 15 kilos added up to RMB36.

5) Manure: RMB10 yuan per tricycle, 4 tricycles added up to RMB40.

6) Seeds: RMB2.5 yuan per jin, 30 kilos added up to RMB150 yuan Subtotal RMB611 yuan.

3 Expenditure for the production brigade charge

1) Charge for public accumulation funds: RMB48 yuan per person, 3 people added up to RMB144 yuan.

2) Charge for village road construction: RMB20 yuan per person, 3 people added up to RMB60.

3) Charge for not contributing work to other public infrastructure construction: RMB15 yuan per person, 3 people added up to RMB45 yuan

4) Charge for school construction: RMB48 yuan per person, 3 people RMB144 yuan. Subtotal: RMB393 yuan.

Annual Crop Income: RMB750 yuan for wheat per mu (=1/15 hectare), 3 mu added up to 2250 jin (=1125 kilos of wheat)



An Old Peasant with Chinese Medicine

“I have been sick for some years. I spent 2,000 yuan on my disease the year before last year. I am in heavy debt. I have no more money for the medicine. It still hurts....”

An unlicensed country doctor, “There is no clinic in the village. The folks have to walk 20 km to see the doctor at the township clinic. For minor illnesses, they just leave them. The peasants lead a hard life. Most of them are malnourished, but they are driven under heavy labor. Their living depends on the mercy of the weather. Most sick peasants who come to buy medicine could afford ten cents or so. It would take them months to recover from a cold.” 7

We have an ironical local saying, "Here, if you get minor illness, lie down; if you get serious illness, hold on; if you could not hold on, go to hell"...



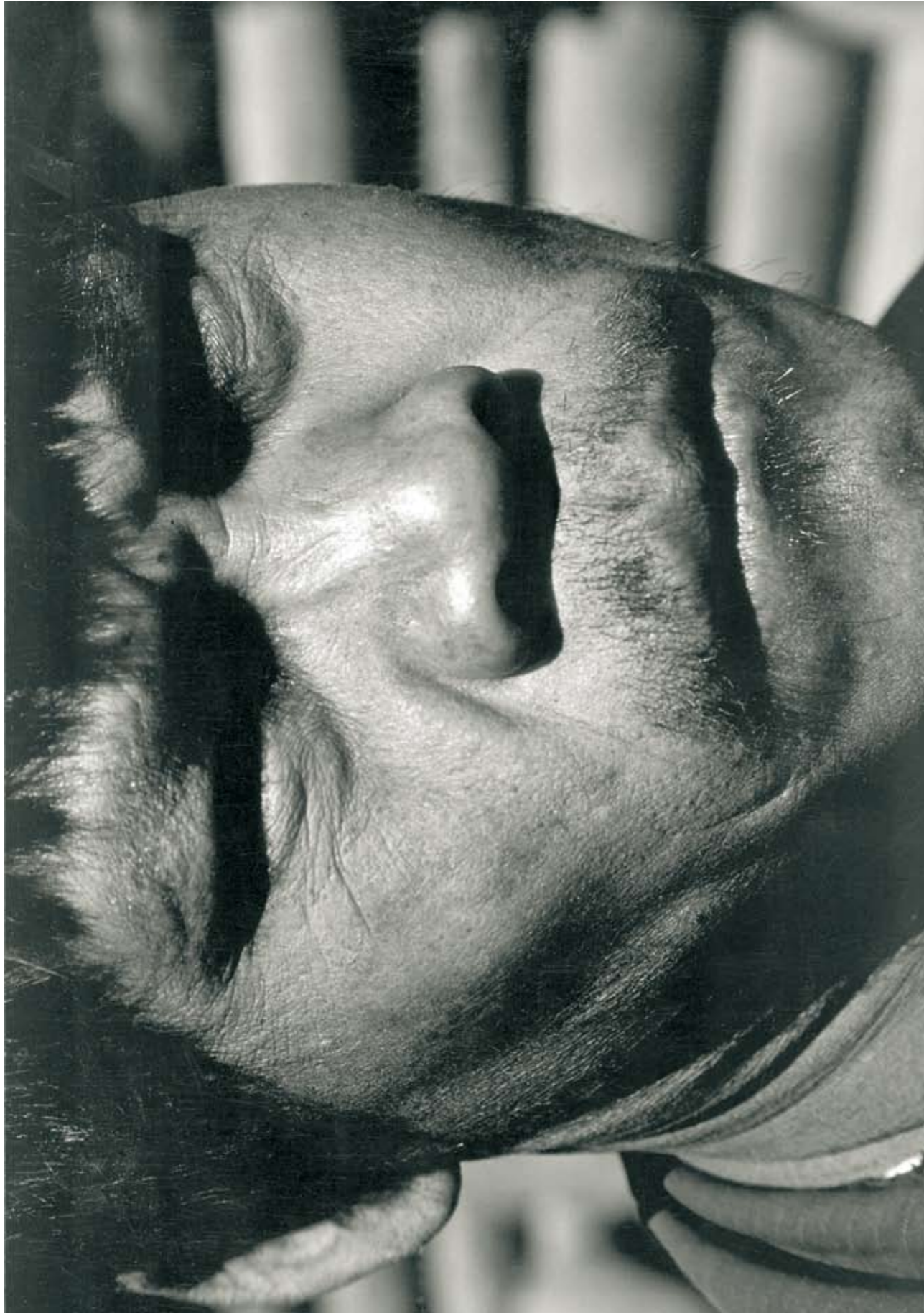
“Either rises or falls the dynasty, suffering still are the common people” , wrote Zhang Yanghao, a verse writer in the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), in his “Hillside Goat: Reminiscence at the Tong Pass”. The Chinese peasants are the world’s largest group of laborers. For thousands of years, they have been surviving on the same lowest social stratum, suffering from time to time the droughts and floods, social unrest, tyranny, disasters of war, and banditry – the varied sorts of natural and social hazards. They are a group still struggling to merely survive. The dramatic changes of China today have attracted the world’s attention, so more aptly should have the plight of the Chinese peasants behind these dramatic changes. They deserve a general human sympathy.



“We should be extremely careful on spending every cent of money. We have to buying the cheapest vegetables and the cheapest clothes. Otherwise, our children have to leave school.”



“The lowest cost for supporting a college student for his four year study is 30,000 yuan. According to the official statistics, the average annual per capita income of the peasant is 2,000 yuan, but their actual income is 1,500 yuan. 30,000 yuan is equal to a peasant’s 15 years, income. That is to say even if a peasant doesn’t eat nor buy clothes and any other articles for everyday use, it would take him 15 years’ hard working to sustain a college student. And this doesn’t include the expense for their children’s education in elementary school and in high school. Moreover, whether their children can find a job or not is still a question.”



"I planted 30-acre fields last year, however, I lost over 2,000 yuan instead of making any profits. While draining off water, the power station shut off our power supply, for our village owed them power bills. We villagers had to send cigarettes, liquor and money to electricians and also invited them to our village, entertaining them with a good square meal. Otherwise they would not supply us power even we might be drowned to death. The peasants were anxious about the inundated crops. The cadres and power controller were taking their time to enjoy the wonderful meal."



“We pray to the Buddha for blessing. In 1970’s the temple here was destroyed in the campaign of Break Through Four Olds. Now the villagers have put up the shed where they burn joss sticks. Lacking money, we haven’t had the Buddha statue until now. I’m thinking about collecting herbs in the mountain and sold them in the market. In this way I can accumulate enough money to invite a Buddha statue in several months.”



Praying



A little Shepherd

Photographer: Why don't you go to school?

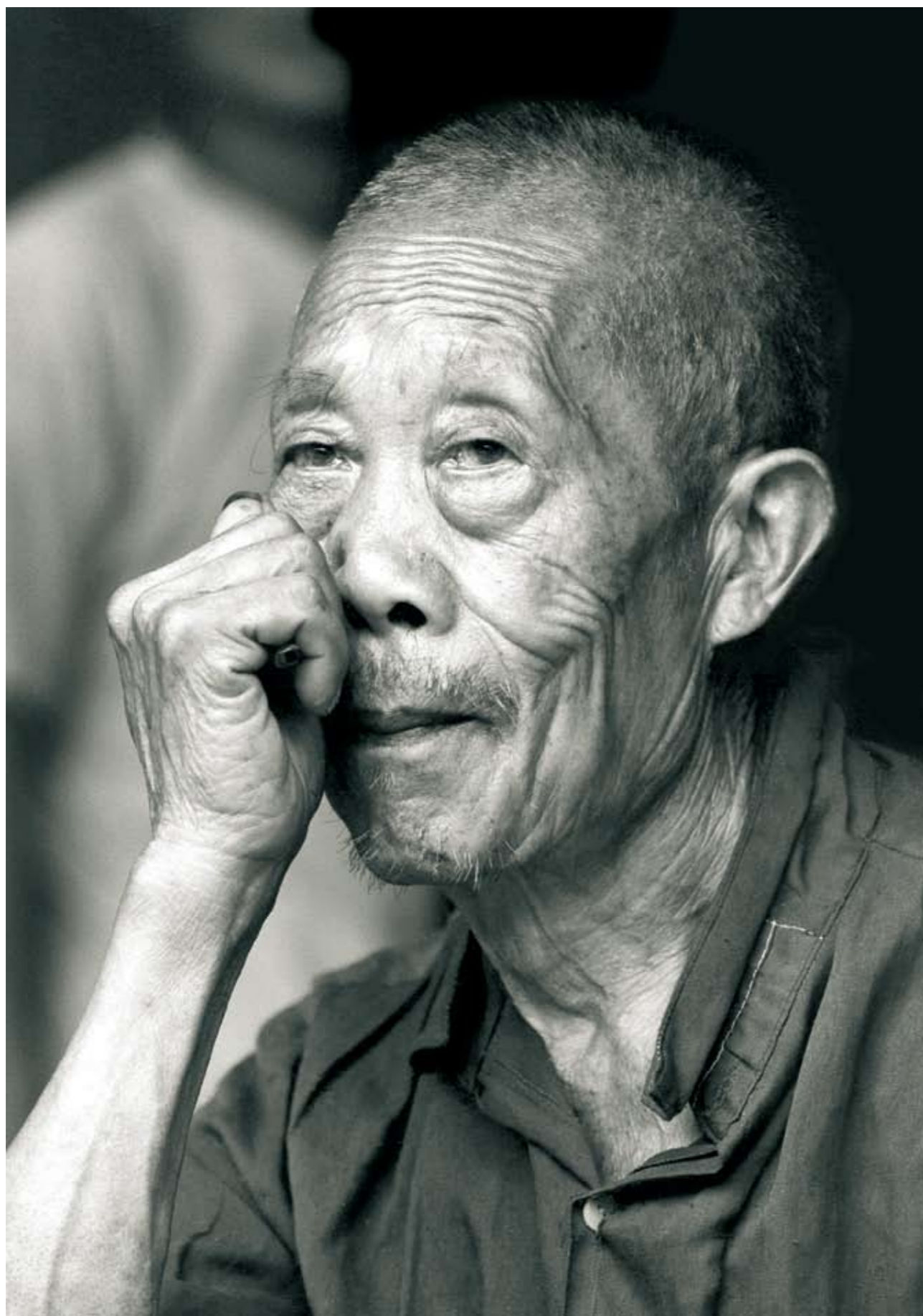
Boy: My grandpa doesn't allow me to.

Photographer: Why?

Boy: I have to look after these sheep.

Photographer: Do you want to go to school?

Boy: Yes, I do.

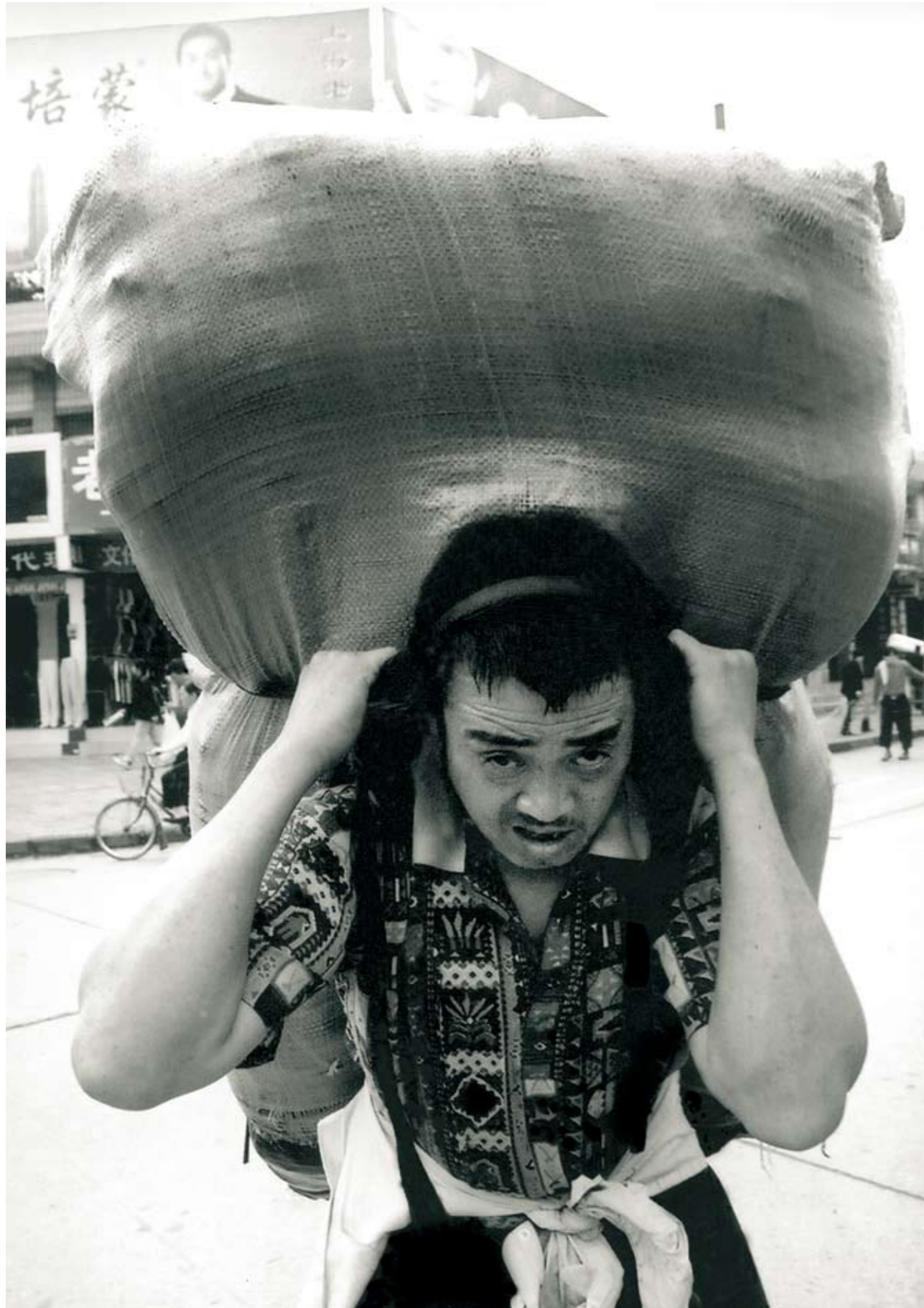


How many forms of fees and taxes should peasants pay?

1. agriculture tax
2. agriculture and forestry
3. charge for public accumulation funds
4. land occupation fee
5. land-contracting fee
6. militia training fee
7. road construction fee
8. attached education fee
9. labor serving for military fee
10. social anti-disaster fee
11. animal husbandry tax
12. fruit tax
13. vegetable tax
14. tobacco tax
15. accumulation funds
16. public welfare funds
17. movie fee
18. family-planning fee
19. children's immunization fee
20. women's gynecologic check-up fee
21. pig feeding tax
23. fee for school construction
24. fee for newspapers and magazines subscription for local ministration.



“There is no hospital in our village. If one is ill and want to go to the doctor. He has to go to the town which is 20 kilometers away from the village, so we never go to the doctor unless it is a very serious disease. And If it is a serious emergency, we can go nowhere for help.”

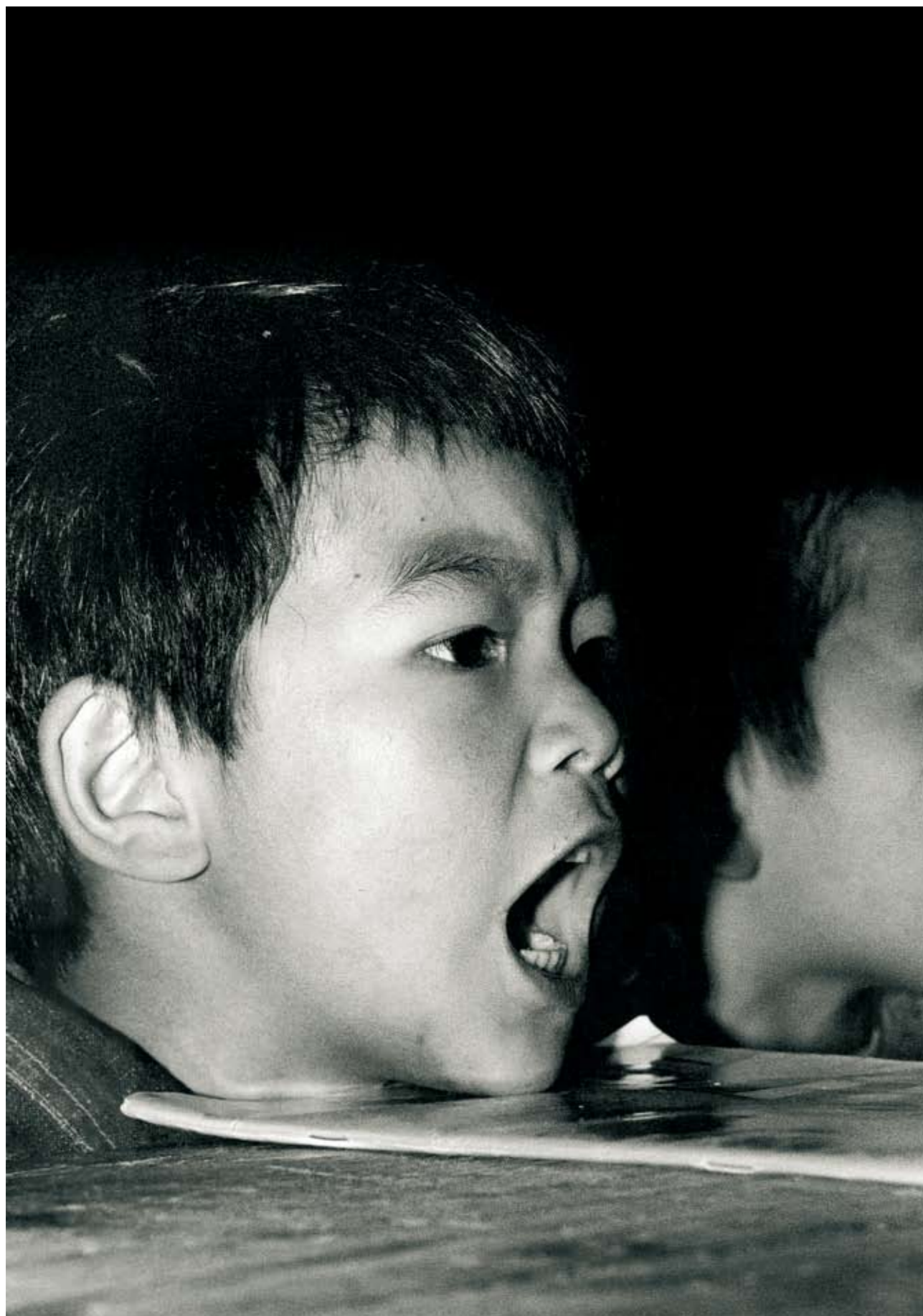


A peasant worker in a city

“Most of the young people in the village have left home to cities to seek a living. They could bring home the source of income. But our life is still very hard.”

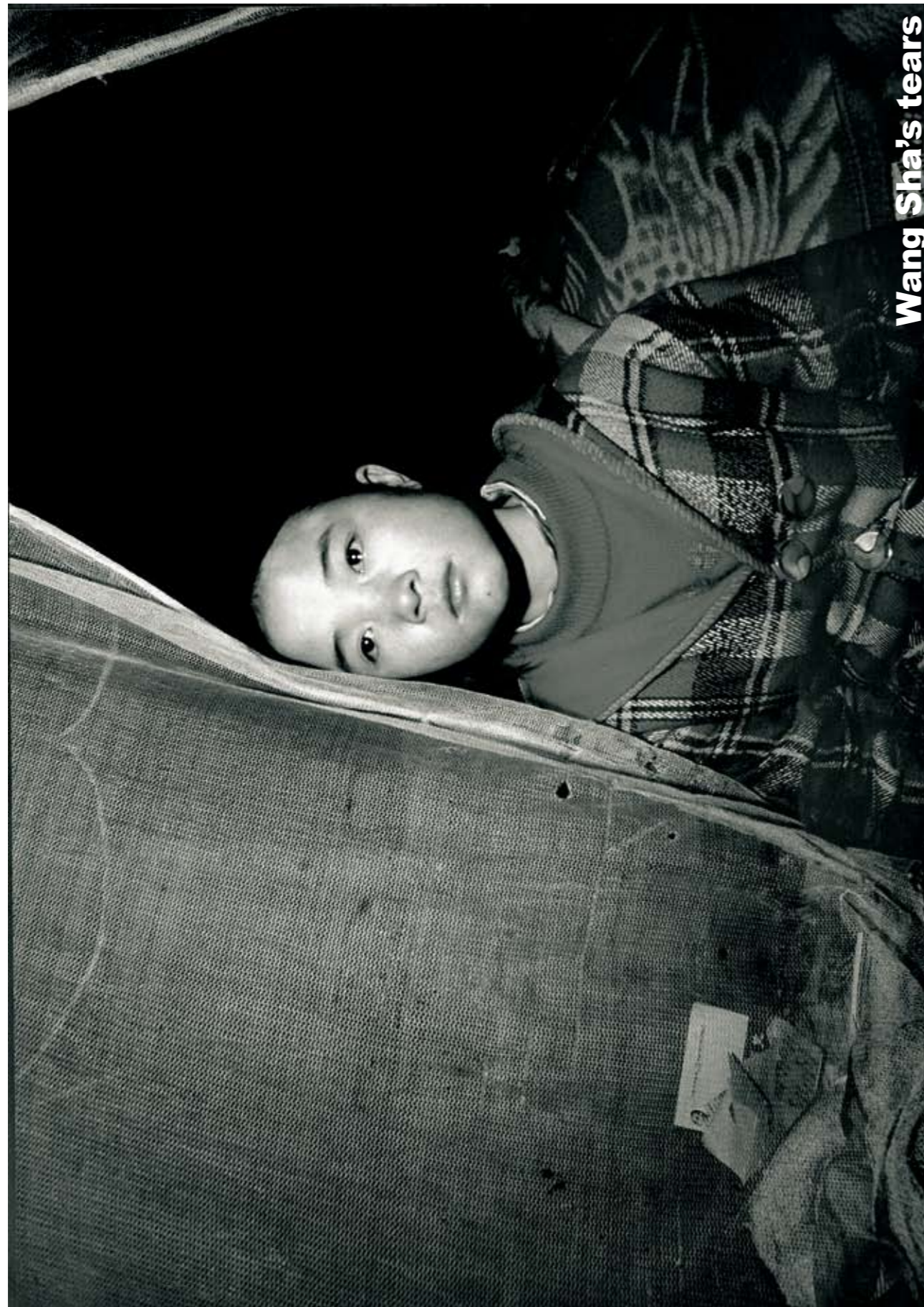


A dead fish – a toy



“Our school charges extremely high on students. The tuition for one semester of a primary school is 400-500 Yuan, of a secondary school is 700-800 Yuan. The tuition may cost half of the total income for each family.

Students’ meals are made by school cooks with materials students bought from their home. Dishes in the school stay unchanged for a whole year. The lunch is a bowl of red rice with a spoon of Chinese cabbage soup. Only two meals are prepared for the supper is ignored. Meat is too luxurious for us. In every sports meeting, due to malnutrition, there always be some students get faint shortly after they begin to run.”



On the afternoon of the New Year's Eve, 2003, I was taking photos on a cropland in Fushou Village, Huaiyuan Town, Chongqing City, Sichuan Province. I was just about to leave as it was getting dark when a disabled peasant came to me as she saw I was taking photos there. With bleeding nose, she kept sobbing out something, but I could only hear her cry—the cry from her bottom of heart. She told me that she was just beaten by some local cadres.

I decided to visit her family and to know more of her story. Her house covered an area of about 40 m² and it is was very dim indeed. There was a sty in one of the rooms and besides that there was a small bed. She told me it was her daughter's bed. It was too dark to take any photos, as I had no flashlight with me. After returning to the hostel, I decided to go back to her house with flashlight. Upon my second visit, her daughter—Wang Sha, a middle-school student had come home from school.



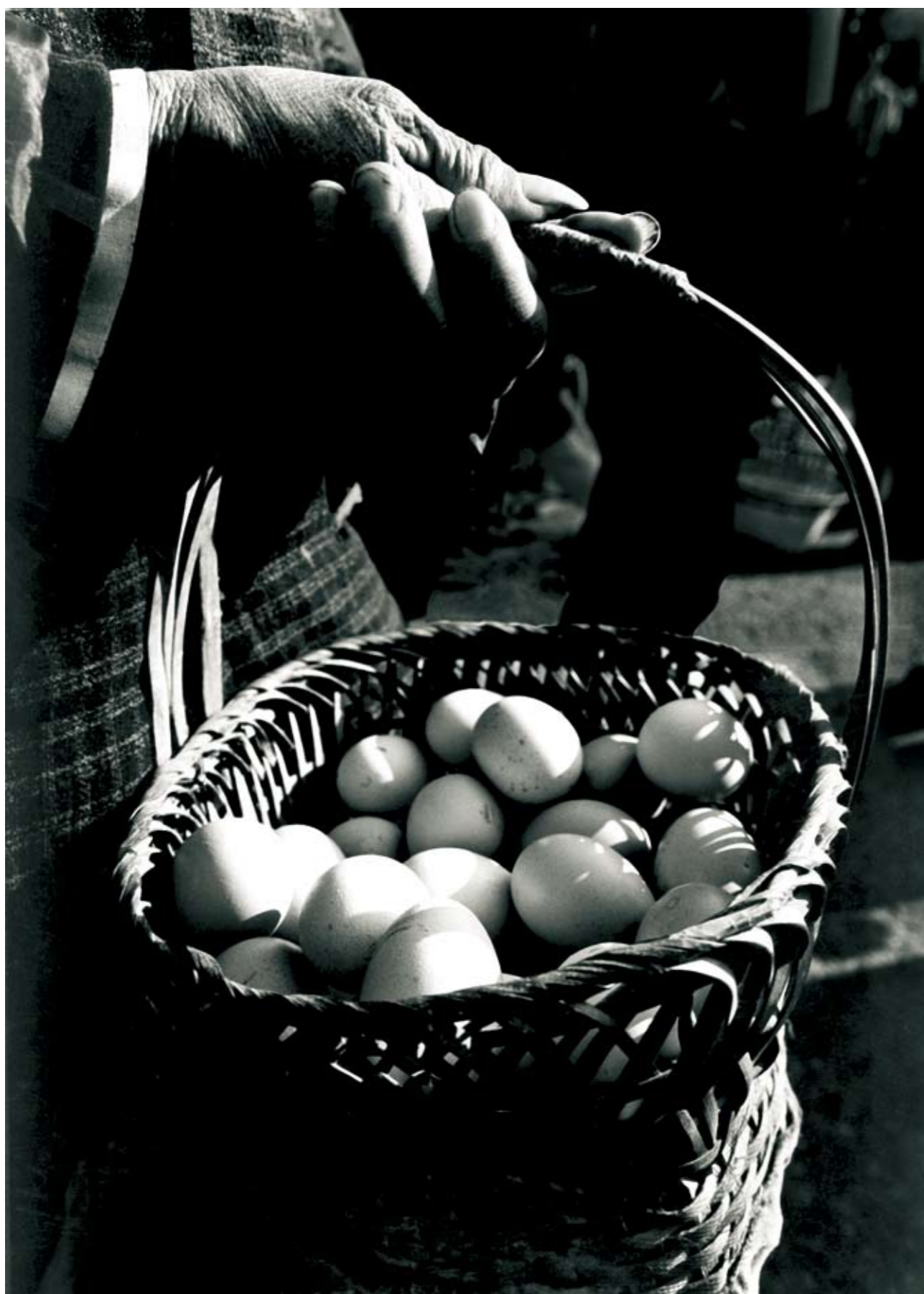
She lives with the pig

She was fourteen years old. No sooner after she saw me did she burst into tears for she had good reasons. She had to pay RMB700 to school for tuition fees this year, but the total annual income of her family was RMB1000. The RMB1000 was from her father's selling sand after digging the river-bed. They wanted to raise more pigs so they built a small sty besides the road. But as it turned out, her mother was beaten to nose-bleeding by some officials from the local administration office and the sty was demolished, because the cadres said the sty was built in a wrong place. I asked them how much to build a sty. The mother told me it is about RMB50.

I advised them not to quarrel with the cadres because farmers were in an inferior position. I gave them 100 Yuan and suggested them finding another place to build a sty. I really hoped I could give the little girl the money she needed for school. But I did not have much money either. I wanted to help more children to go to school through my work.



“Do you know how little money we can earn? If we make our living just by ploughing, we would go hungry. So we never believe the news in the TV or in the newspaper, telling us peasants are getting rich. We think that is impossible.”



“Rice was sold 0.72 yuan per jin (half a kilo) in 1981, and now it's 0.73 yuan. In 1981 the yield per mu was 1000 jin or so, but the input has been increased greatly. The leaf tobacco was sold 4 yuan per jin in 1981, and now even the best one can only be sold for 5 yuan. Egg was sold for 2.5 yuan per jin in 1981, and now its price has decreased to 2.2 yuan. (In 1981, one dollar could be exchanged for about 3 yuan, now for about 8 Yuan.”



“I am 83 years old, my sons and daughters now have their own families and live in their own houses. I myself have 3 mu of field to till. Photographer, tell me how many years I still have in my life, 2 years? Or even less? You can just tell me the truth. I won't be angry. I have had no electricity light for these years, because I cannot afford the wire. Photographer, don't take my photo. I have no money to pay you.”



An old man selling dead fish

“In our village, the eight-six-year-old man, uncle Lai, bought four Liang (a unit of weight, one Liang=50 grams) of pork. His son discovered the pork and wanted to snatch, but uncle Lai didn't allow him to. Then his son killed him with a kitchen knife...”



Photographer: Is there any salt?

Peasant: No, we can't afford to buy the salt.

Photographer: What did you sell to exchange for two jin(a unit of weight. 1 jin = 1/2 kilogram) of kerosene yesterday, as you have mentioned just now?

Peasant: I sold a cock for ten yuan weighted two jin and a half.

Photographer: How much did you spend to buy two jin of kerosene?

Peasant: It's two yuan five jiao for a jin of kerosene. It cost five yuan.

Photographer: Then, five yuan left?

Peasant: I bought two jin of white spirit except two jin of kerosene. It's two yuan for one jin.

Photographer: One yuan left at last. Didn't you buy any salt?

Peasant: Eh. But no money left after that.



A meal sent to the field

Chinese cabbage, salt vegetable and sweet potato.

“The per capita tax in our village in 1999 was 250 yuan. All the families planting crops all end up with losing money. After this spring festival, all peasants in our village decided to stop planting crops. 1,400 Mu farm land in our village are left unplanted. We did not want to work in the field for any longer.



A Kind of "Education"

(punishing the children by forcing them to kneel down)

In some rural areas, if kids are naughty and do some thing wrong, parents would punish them by forcing them to kneel down. From the very childhood, these children's sense of self respect and dignity is violated and defeated by the adults once and once again. These children are instilled the notion self respect is nothing and they have to submit when facing with the authority. If children grow up in this way, how could they be brave enough to speak out their true ideas and strive for a better life when they grow up?



The birthday on Christmas Day

“I have nothing but farm work on my birthday. I know I am one year older. That is it.”



Photographer: How long have you been wearing these shoes?

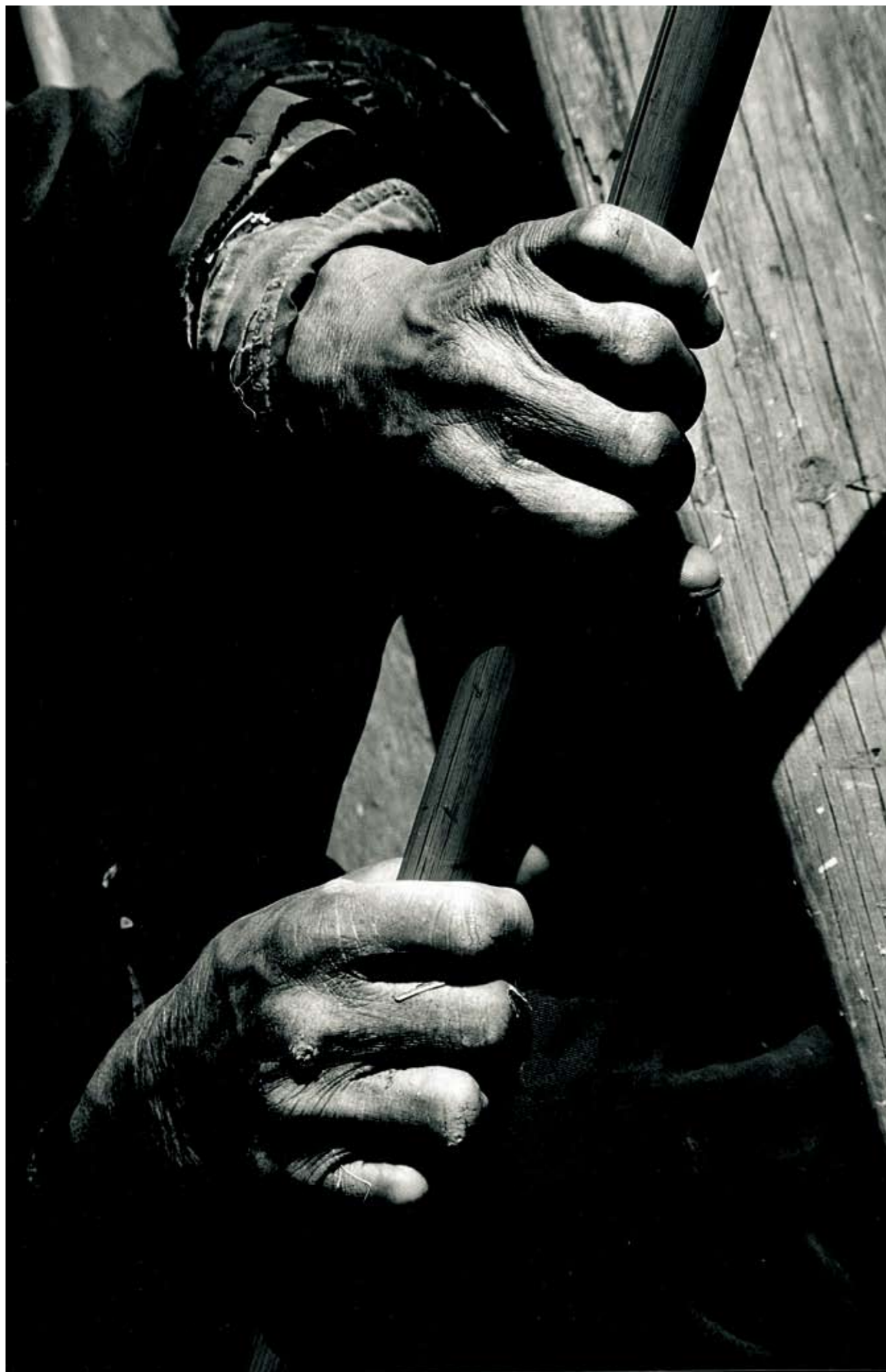
Peasant: I bought them last year.

Photographer: For how much did you get them?

Peasant: 11 yuan. (1US\$ for 8 RMB yuan)

Photographer: Most people here wear this kind of shoes? It seems to me that at least 80% peasants here wear this, rubber-soled shoes used in army.

Peasant: Yeah.



“The per capita tax in our village in 1999 was 250 yuan. All the families planting crops all end up with losing money. After this spring festival, all peasants in our village decided to stop planting crops. 1,400 Mu farm land in our village are left unplanted. We did not want to work in the field for any longer.”



“We bought a kind of pesticide Luan Chongke from our village supply station. It turned out to be a fake pesticide. Because of it, we, 37 families of cotton peasants had our 1800 Mu of field no yield. Seeing this, there is nothing we can do but shedding tears. Some family were even ruined by this.”



“Usually we have the sweet potato porridge for breakfast and seldom can we have pure rice. Our dishes are usually dried turnips made by ourselves.

For lunch, perhaps you will not believe me; we usually eat the porridge left from breakfast, and occasionally some fried green vegetables.

For supper, we cook a pot of thick porridge and get it out when it isn't thoroughly cooked. That is the so-called rice, which we call sweet potato rice. If we are lucky enough, we could have meat, but actually we seldom have such good luck.”



It was reported:

Since 1989, the Hope Project (a campaign called by the government to collect donations for the poor children who are out of school) has gone on for eleven years. Up till now (2000) 1.93 billion RMB has been collected. However, the expenditure spent on food and drink with the public fund in this country is 140 billion RMB. In this way, 1500 billion RMB has been used up on food and drink by the government officials at all levels within eleven years.



In January 2004, I visited Qingquan, a small town beside the Wujiang River, when the local market was just open. The town has a population of several hundreds, with just one small street, where I found 6 gambling spots - on the street in the day! Gamblers were many, mostly peasants going to the market who put their gross bet on the table. Into forties, I no longer had the kind of impulse as a young correspondent would have. Still, I could not stand to see them are cheated. Having gained my nerve, alone without any covering passport, I took three shots. Almost immediately, I heard a threatening snarl from the far end of the table – “smash his camera...”

“Kick in”, the people outside my hotel room shouted, at three hours past midnight – the hotel itself being a gambling den. The people who came in appeared to be police officers, who demanded me to show of my ID. Later I was told that a policeofficer had been killed by a group of gamblers the day before. The scene was only several hundred meters away from my shooting spot, just cross the river from the hotel I had checked in.

Again I felt an imminent danger. I decided to leave the hotel immediately. I departed Qingquan on a boat to Gongtan. On board were many school children returning to their school in Gongtan. Among them there was a short girl seemingly in her early teens. She carried a large bundle of firewood on her back. I asked her for what use the firewood was. "For cooking," said she. "How much does it cost you for a month's living?" I asked. "A dozen yuan," she answered. "How old are you?" "Fifteen." I realized that she was shorter for her real age due to malnutrition. It was common seen that school children in country schools fell faint in gym course.

On the same boat, a dozen children, seemingly high juniors, were gambling, with some bets in 50 RMB notes. These children shocked me – They just quarreled with the boatman for a single yuan and each child would depend on this 50 yuan for several months' living. This bewildered me: "what has gone wrong with the society – in the year 2004?" Tears went down behind my camera. Out of the dozens of adults on board, I decided to stop them. A number of elder children pointed their fingers at me, "What do you want to do?" "I would report it to your school, and you will be dismissed," I said. This made them stop their gambling.



In China, a greater part of population lives in the rural area. The root and the sentiment of Chinese people are also there. But, the poorest place is the rural area too. For the people who live in the mountainous area, they are ploughing and weeding with their face towards the loess and their back under the sun. They live and multiply there as always without complaining about or signing for what life has granted them. They just live like this day after day, year after year and generation after generation.



“Early in the morning we have to get up and turn up the soil where the early rice has just been harvested with ploughs. First we break the soil into pieces with a harrow, and then we ridge the land with a hoe. About 70 centimeter there is a ridge. During the process of ridging, the organic fertilizer must be filled in. After finishing ridging, we plant the sweet potato seeds and water them. Most of the time, we have to work under the burning sun. It is difficult for someone who haven’t done such work to imagine this feeling.”



“On a stuffy afternoon of a hot summer day, reaping in the wheat fields seems extremely endless. This kind of pain is beyond words.

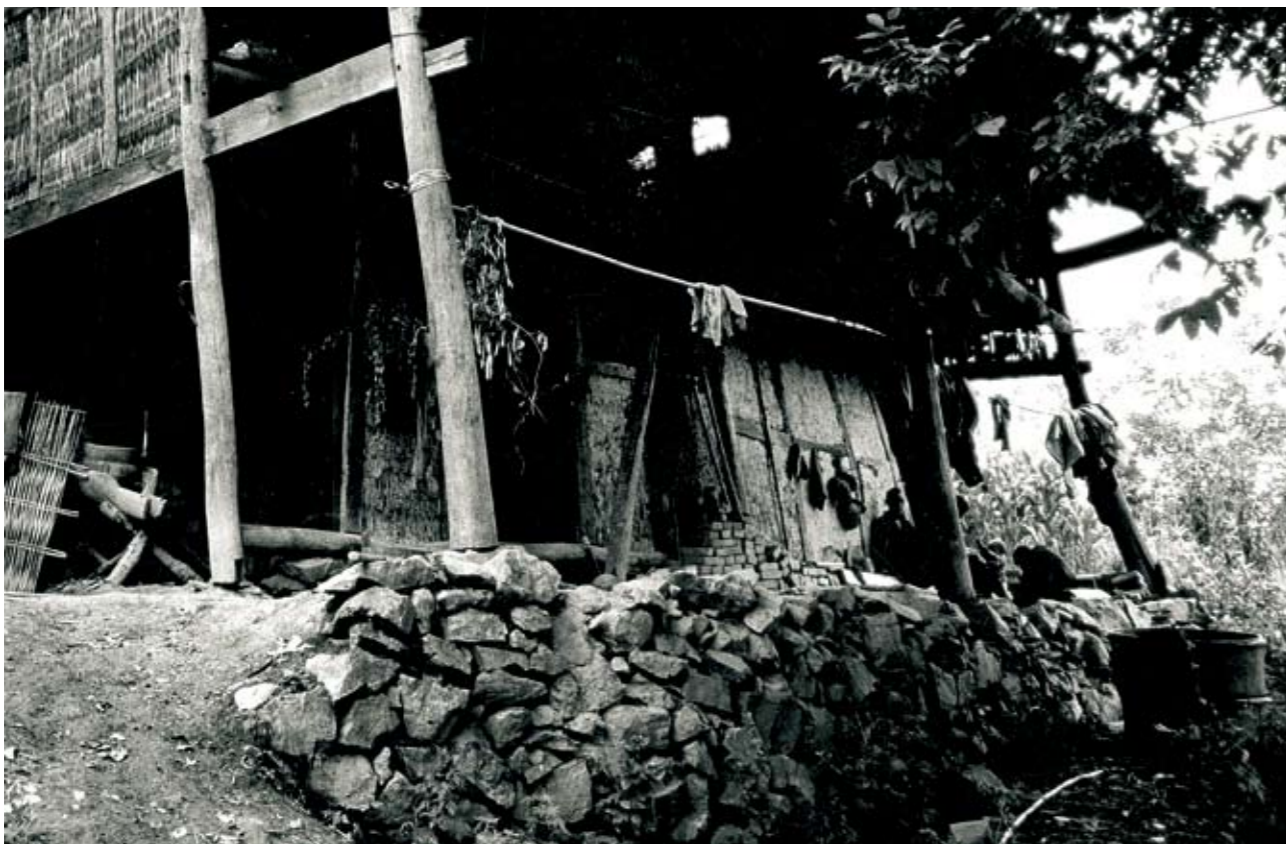
We have to enter one-person-high corn fields to apply fertilizer. In order to not be cut by sharp corn leavers, we have to wearing long shirt and long trousers. It is so hot! Plus with the pain and ache of the cuts by corn leaves, it is really hard to endure.



Rice Harvest



"There are over 60 families living in our village. For one year or two, there can't be over one new built house. For many years, these old houses stay the same. These houses can be found everywhere here."





“In our family, it is not enough to pay the taxes if we only depend on our field, so most the labors in our have gone out to seek a living. They remit money home to pay for all kind of taxes demanded by all level of government.

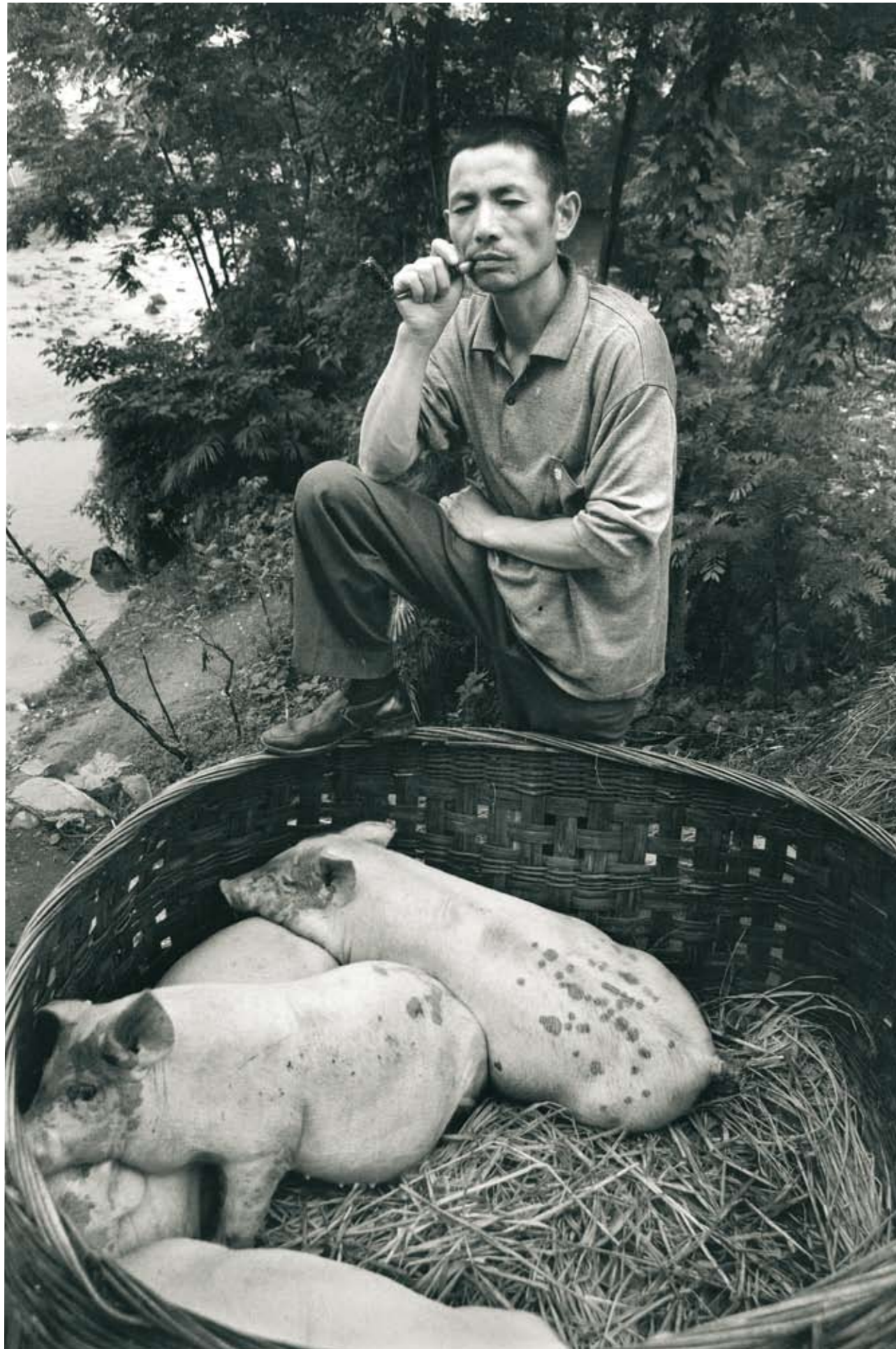
The township government charges for all kinds of things. In order to collect the money, the government appoints certain people to do it. These people take the cows or pigs away, they sometimes even beat peasant. For if they can't get the money, they get no bonus.



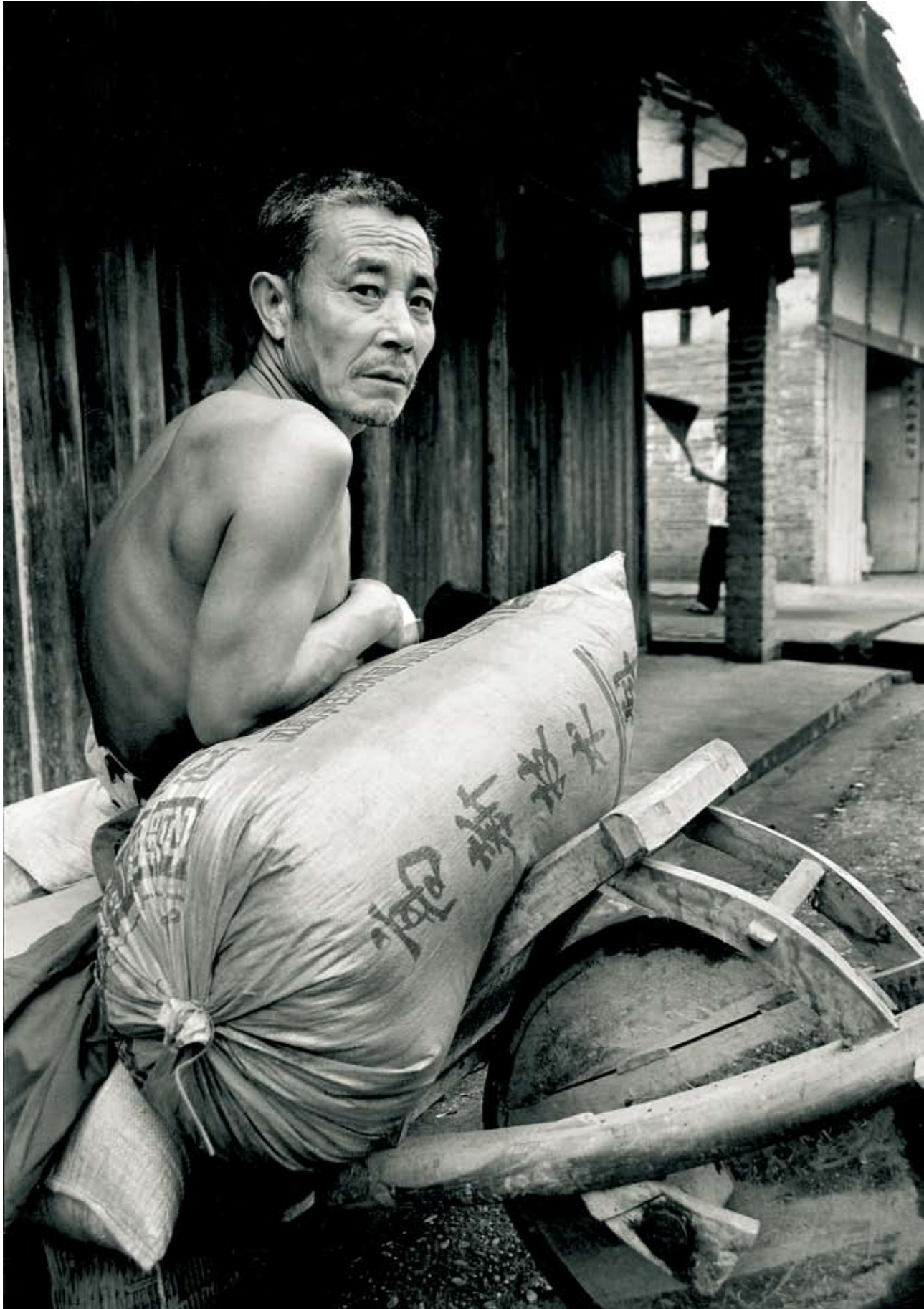
“Just after we planted our crops, the cadres came to us collect money. They charged over 200 Yuan for each Mu without any chance for bargaining. They turn blind ears when we said we have to buy fertilizer and we want to pay the money a few days later. If we keep saying this, they will ask us to kneel down as a punishment.”



”Now our farm cattle are stolen even in the daytime, let along at night. These thieves stole our stuff by being lifted out from the yard with a crane or being dragged out by breaking through the wall. There are more ways to steal roosters, ducks, rabbits and sheep. Even if we sleep with these fowl, we can not keep them from being stolen. ”



“I planted 30-acre fields last year. Instead of making any profit, I lose over 2000 Yuan. When our field was flooded and we have to drain off the water, the power station cut our power supply. For our village own them money. We villagers had to send them cigarettes, liquor and money and also to invite them to a good meal in our village. Otherwise they would keep cutting our power even our field would be flooded. The peasants were so worried about their crops, but the cadres and the power supplier were taking their time enjoying the good meal.”



Selling farm product



The only thing in the family that can be trade for money

Peasants rarely eat eggs. They save the eggs and trade them for money, so they can buy salts and some other life necessities.



Movable supermarket



Chatting

When men return from cities with the money they earned, they can avoid doing housework and farm work in the family.



A strong man and a child

Children and women take most of the farm work and housework.



“I have no money to pay the doctor! If our medical expense is over 4,000 Yuan, we’d rather choose to die at home instead of going to the hospital.”



"I have been sick for two years. I once worked in a plastic production factory in Shenzhen, one year after that, I got sick and found it difficult to stand up. I have no money to go to the doctor."



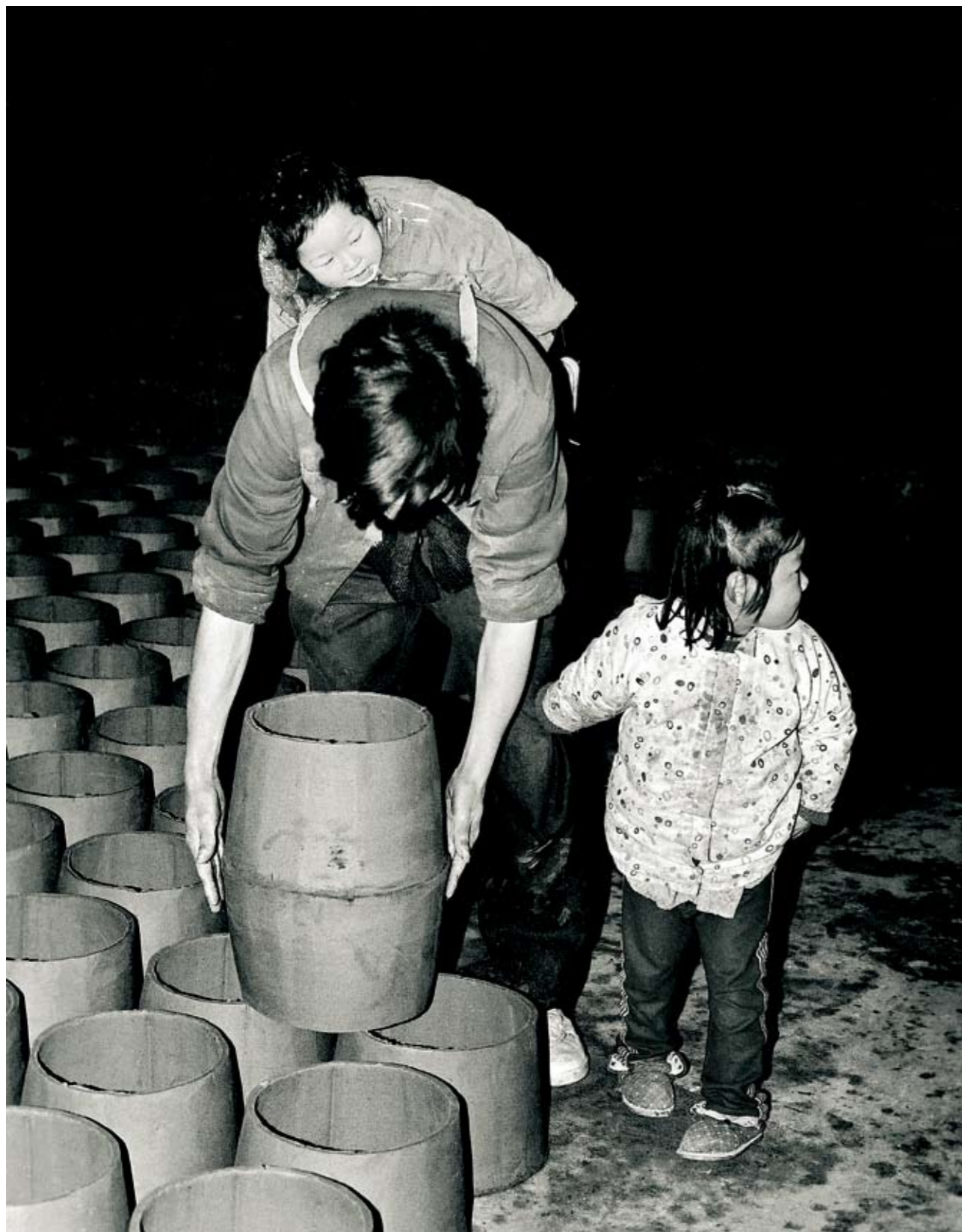
Selling vegetables

Poor rural mothers in scholar's view:

In the Chinese rural areas, there is a special group of people - mothers in poverty. Many of them live in extreme poverty. They don't have enough food, and can't get any social welfare, such as basic education and health care. A large number of them are illiterate and poor in health. More than half of them are suffering from women's diseases, according to the official Chinese report. For their children and family, they endure all these pains from diseases and economic difficulties and hard work.



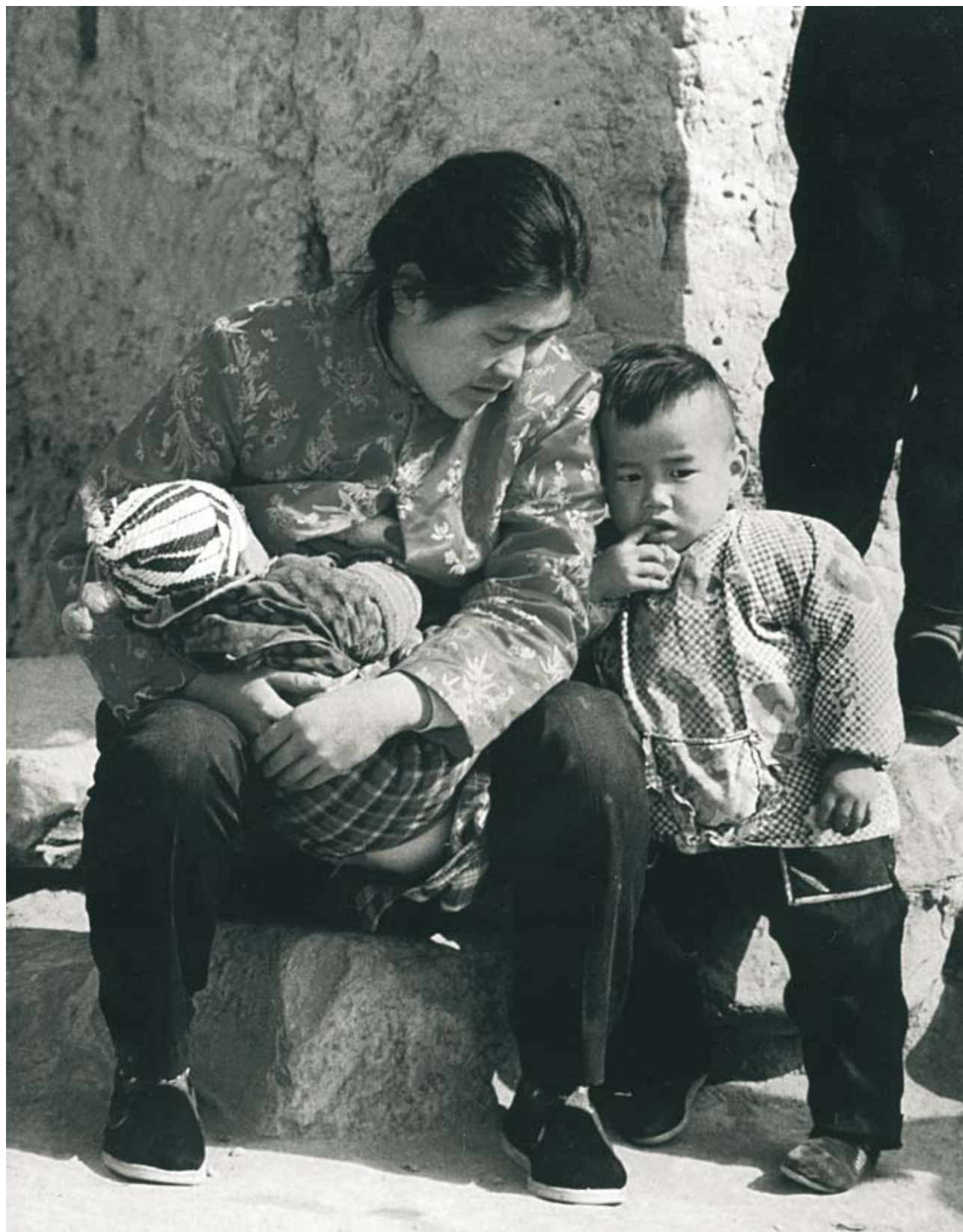
“My husband died when I was thirty five years old. There are three people in my family depending on me for food. I am 64 years old this year. I farm in the fields where the others are not willing to farm. The harvest in this year is 1000 Jin. I plough in the fields that should be farmed by four people.”



The “One Child” policy is carried out very strictly in our place. The family planning administration in the village treats us very harshly. Women of childbearing age, despite they have given birth to child or not, are required to have six or seven check-ups every year with 10-yuan Charge each time. Being half an hour late will be fined 50 to 100 Yuan. They will even punish the relatives if one member of the family violates the “one Child” policy. In order to avoid the punishment, many people in our village move to other places.



“If our first child is a girl, we will give birth to a second child. If the second is still a girl, we will give birth to a third. “of the three kind of unfilial conducts, the most serious is without male descendants.” It is better to have a son in the house. Otherwise, our family will be bullied by other families.”



"My neighbour is my schoolmate. He got married at the age of 29. his wife was pregnant and they have been granted the license for giving birth to a child. But this license was taken back a few days before the child' birth, because they didn't send any bribes to the family palnning cadres. They said this couple violates the family planning policy. They forced the woman to abort the child, which later turned out to be a boy. This family was also fined. His father went out to borrow money. He had drunk too much and fell asleep by the road, and was frozen to death.



"A pregnant young woman in our neighbor village went out to give birth to another child. She thus violates the "one child policy". Her sister and her husband were shut in a dim cabin for several days by some family panning cadres. They were even not allowed to go out to eat food or to go to the toilet. Her mother were so angry and sad that she drunk some pesticide and killed herself."



" In our place, most people who look after kids are old people or children. Our parents are searching a living in cities, we are left behind and have to take care of ourselves."



Only one child in the family can go to school.



" The eldest child among us is 12 years old and the youngest is 8. W are in the same school. By carrying these blocks for our school, we can earn much for our food, otherwise, we have to send the school crop products."



Doing Homework



" Our family can only support one child to go to school. My parents choose my elder sister, so I have to stay at home."



Photographer: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

Litter Girl: I...I haven't any brothers.

Photographer: You have sisters, two sisters?

Litter Girl: Yes.

Photographer: How old are you?

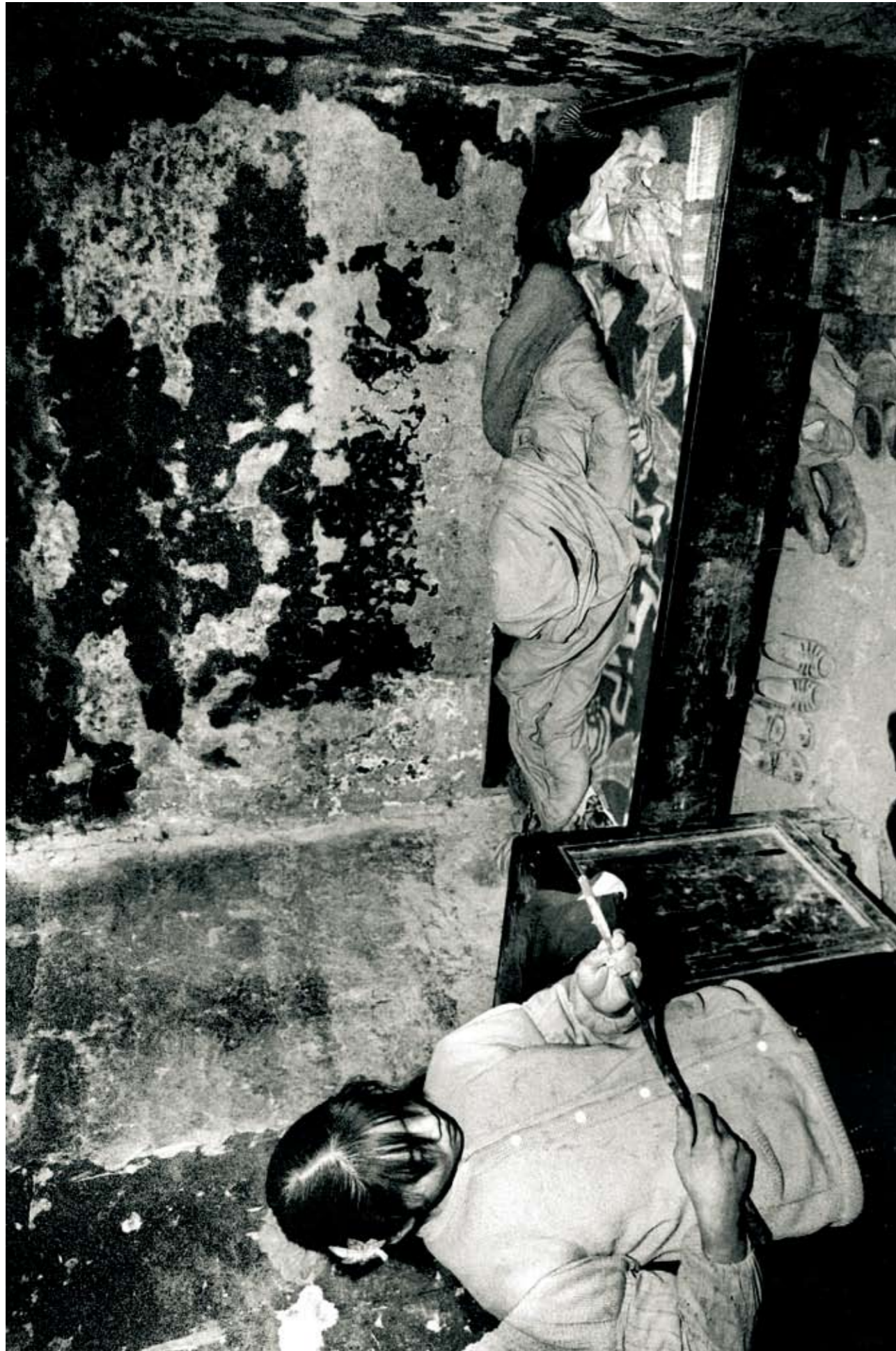
Litter Girl: Thirteen

Photographer: She had never been to school, right?

Grandma: Never

Photographer: Did you get punished when she was born?

Grandma: Yes.



A girl's room

Photographer: Where do you live? Take me there, little girl, what are you murmuring when I am taking photo of you? You said the place where you live is pigsty, did you?

Litter Girl: Yes.



Photographer: How old is your eldest daughter?

Peasant: Eleven.

Photographer: How long had she studied at school?

Peasant: Until grade four.

Photographer: What' her name?

Peasant: ***

Photographer: How old is your second daughter?

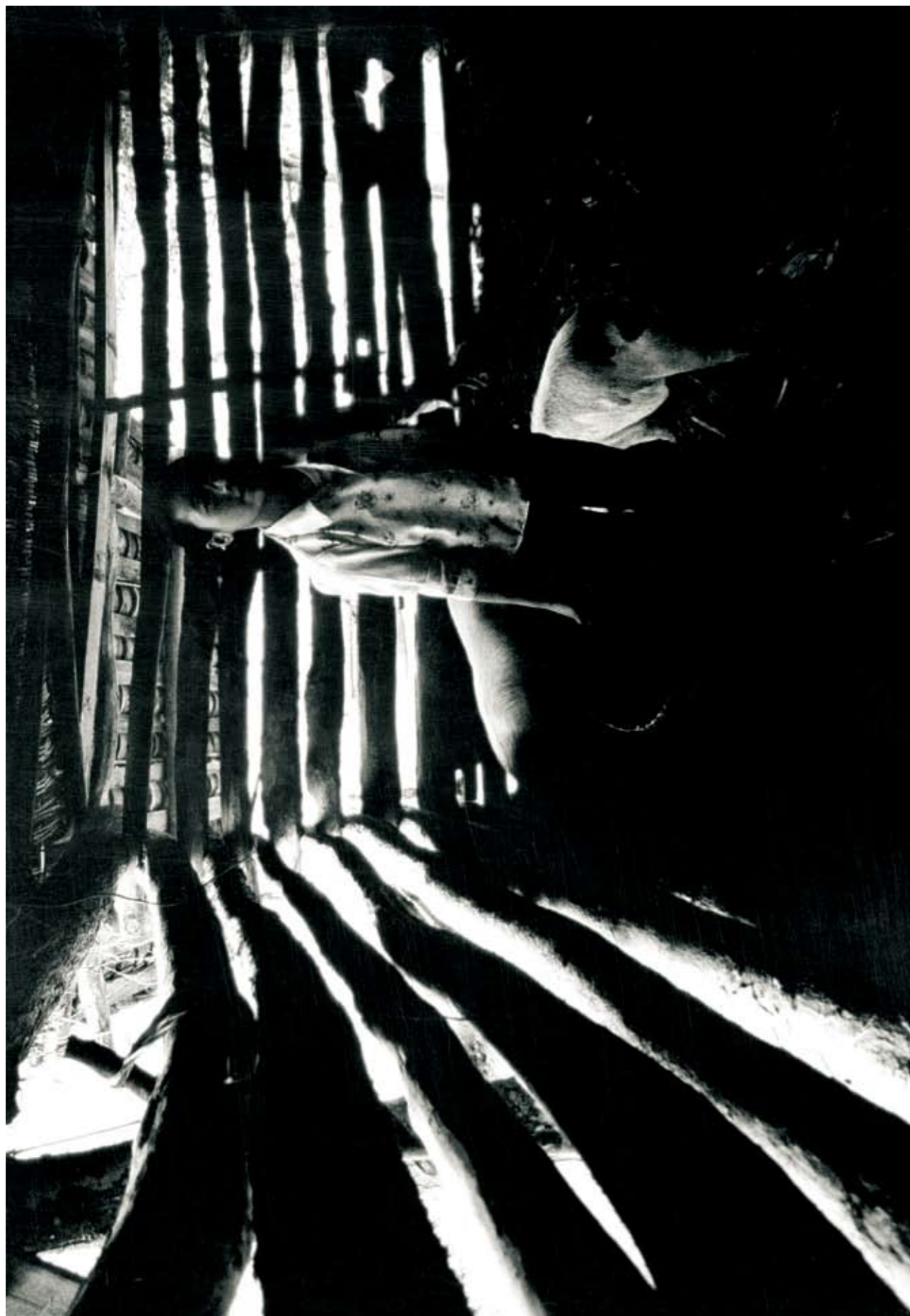
Peasant: More than eight.

Photographer: How about the youngest one?

Peasant: A little more than two.

Photographer: Were you fined?

Peasant: No.



Photographer: She left school after grade four, did she?

Peasant: Yes. We can't afford the tuition fees. Just taking a look at us, her father was ill; the tax is heavy- more than one thousand Yuan per year. Last year it's more than eight hundred Yuan. Photographer: Where does her father work?

Peasant: In Hebei province.

Photographer: Has he ever remitted you money?

Peasant: Yes, over 400 Yuan

Photographer: When?

Peasant: In February.

Photographer: Then 400 Yuan till now. Has he written to you?

Peasant: No, He called us.

Photographer: Where did you answer the phone? There is no electricity here.

Peasant: I go to ** to answer the phone,



Photographer: Do you want to go to school?

Daughter: Yes, very much.

Peasant: This one is now studying in the school in our village, grade one and grade two next year.

Photographer: Is she good at study?

Peasant: Just so so. That one is much better.

Photographer: Your eldest daughter quitted her studies when she was at grade four, right?

Peasant: Um. That's impossible for her to continue her study. We can't afford the fee due to our poor condition.



Photographer: What does she do at home everyday?

Peasant: cooking rice, scooping up potatoes, cutting grass, feeding cattle, driving the cow outside and now cutting grass for pigs. There is no free time in the countryside.



Photographer: I saw your daughter never go out to play with other children, why?

Peasant: She does not like playing outside with others. She just like staying at home.

Photographer: You should ask her to go out side to play, that would be better for her health. How much money do you give her each month?

Peasant: I don't give her money. I bought clothes and food for her, so she doesn't need money herself.



Photographer: How old is she?

Peasant: Eight.

Photographer: Is she in grade one?

Peasant: Yeah, but grade two next text.

Photographer: What is her name?

Peasant: ***

Photographer: What does she do everyday?

Peasant: Cooking rice when she gets up morning and read books.

Photographer: Looking after her younger sister, everyday?

Peasant: Um.

Photographer: So, she carries her sister on her back when you are working in the fields. Is her younger sister two years old?

Peasant: Eh.



Photographer: Besides looking after her sister and cooking for the family, what else does she do? What's wrong with her hands?

Peasant: Due to carrying the iron jar.

Photographer: Oh, I see, no wonder it is so black.

Peasant: Also due to cutting grass.

Photographer: That's why they are so black. Oh, cutting grass and scooping up potatoes. Oh, when does she begin to do that?

Peasant: When she was five years old or six she started to cook rice for herself.

Then, gathering firewood, cutting green grass for pigs when she is older. She can do the light work all by herself and we do the heavy things.



The rice has been prepared and taken to the table. Although I am very thirsty hungry, I feel it difficult to eat anything. This is the first time for me to have a meal cooked by an eleven-year-old girl. At the table, the eleven-year-old eldest sister is sitting on my left, the younger sister, eight-year-old, on my right and a two-year-old girl sleeping in her eldest sister's arms. I feel this is the most delicious meal I have ever had in my life, but I cannot help shedding tears anyway. I tried hard to calm down in order not to let these little girls see through my mixed feelings



The girl, who is just eight years old, has her hands covered with thick callus. Her finger nails are filled with black mud. She has to do all the work with her mother from early morning to the night regardless that her body haven't grown fully yet. The younger sister is in grade one but the eldest sister has been out school for several years.



Even the youngest girl who is only two years old has learned to cut grass with her two sisters. Seeing the earnest looking in her face, I was deeply shocked with hot tears. All I could do now is pressing the camera shutter again and again with my trembling hand. I want to record this scene – my nation and my people, they are in the abyss of misery.





Little children are usually left in the house when parents and elder children go to the farmland to work. The doorway seems to be too high for them to climb over. There are only dogs which can accompany them.



Photographer: How old is your child?

Peasant: Two years old.

Photographer: Why do you bring her with you while you are working in the field?

Peasant: I have no choice. She has to go with us since we, adults and elder children, are all out.

Photographer: she already knows how to cut grass.



It is reported:

One tens of the illiterate people in the word are in China, and more than ninety of the illiterates are in the rural areas. In these areas, poverty produces illiteracy. In turn, the illiteracy brings more poverty, which forms a vicious circle.



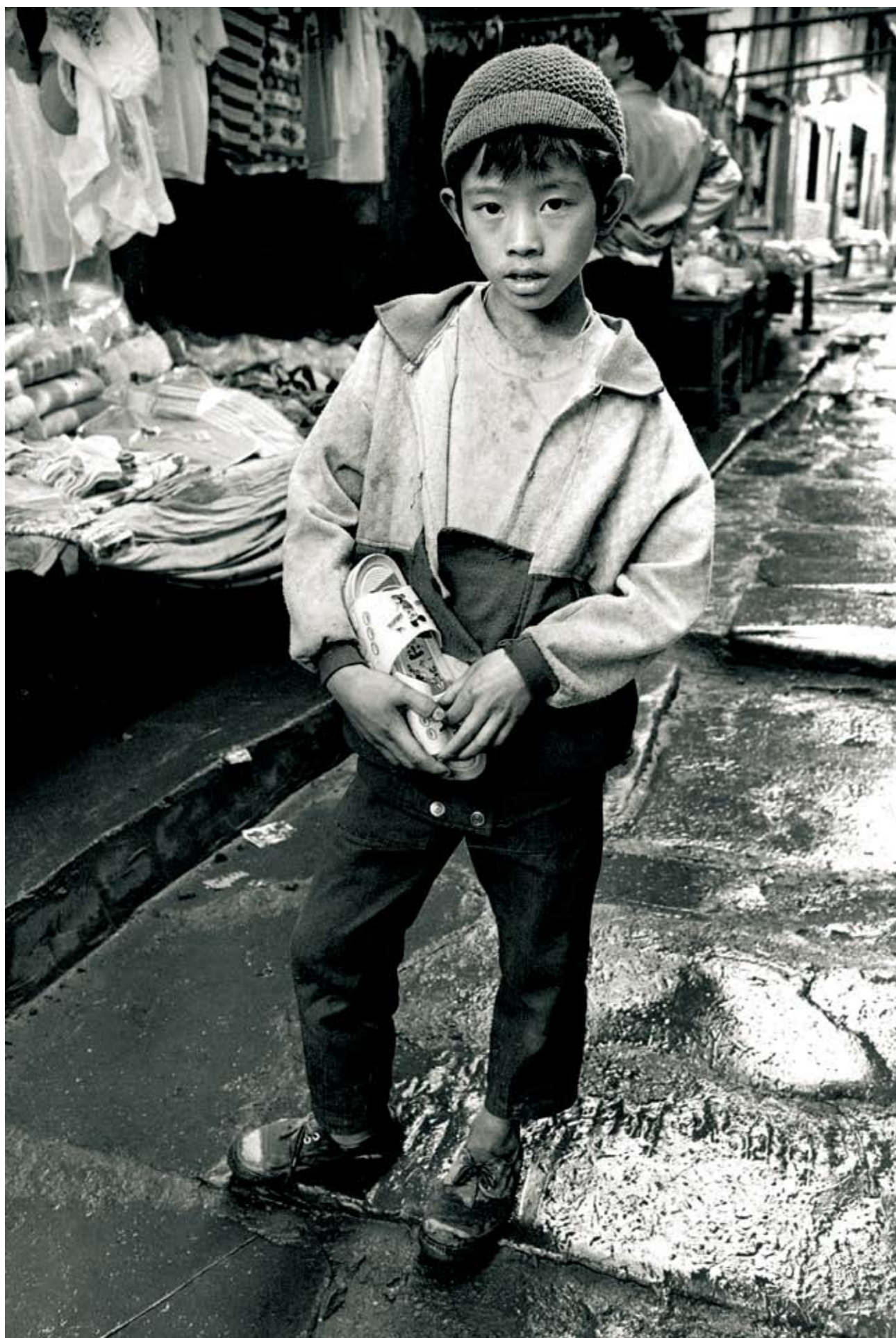
When I was taking photos of people around her, she kept staring at me expressionlessly. When I turned my camera at her, she still looked at me without much facial expression. All through that, she just kept eating the raw rice from the bag before her. She had to sit there for a whole day waiting somebody to buy her rice and there was no time for her to leave for lunch, thus the raw rice became a lunch for her.



“I don’t know what the industrialization or modernization said on the TV are exactly about. Now it cost us more and more money to pay the children’s tuition fees. Many children have to leave the school because of the heavy charge.”



“Our local government asks some school in our area to start “training class”. Every year children around ten years old, who are out of school, are called to attend this “training class” for one month before government officials the upper level coming to examine their work. But this kind of “class” does not teach the children anything. After one-month playing time, these children are given a certification for graduation. This certification can demonstrate that they have completed the nine-year-compulsory education. Then our local government in our village claims they have fulfilled their responsibility. Finally they can pass the exam safely.”



“My school is far from my home, so I have to live in the school dormitory. When we are after school and go back to the dormitory, students from the town usually put on their slippers, but I had no slippers. I asked my Mum to buy one pair for me, but she said she have no extra money. She asked me to wait. I have been waiting for a long time. Today, Mum finally manages to save enough money for my slippers. I go to the fair and bought one pair immediately. See how lovely they are!”



“What on earth do we peasants have? We have homes, but adults are earning their living outside. We have fields, but dare not plant crops. After a whole year’s hard work, nothing but a number of debts are left. Where is the justice exactly? We labor all our lives only to comfort these cadres and profiteers.



“A girl in our village now is studying in a university. She did a research on people’s incomes in our county last year. The result was that the annual income of the county-level cadres was more than 20,000 yuan. That was 100 times that of a common family in our village.

We peasants all lead a’ thrifty life, while those cadres eat and drink merrily. They each lead a comfortable life. So if a peasant wants to become rich, he must become a cadre first. But who will be the peasants, if everyone wants to be a cadre.



“I hope our taxes could be reduced again, for our annual per capita income is only several hundred Yuan. It seems the day to become rich is still far far away.”



Checking the cloth

“We need the most durable cloth, so we can wear them for years when working in the field. As for the brand, we know nothing about it.”

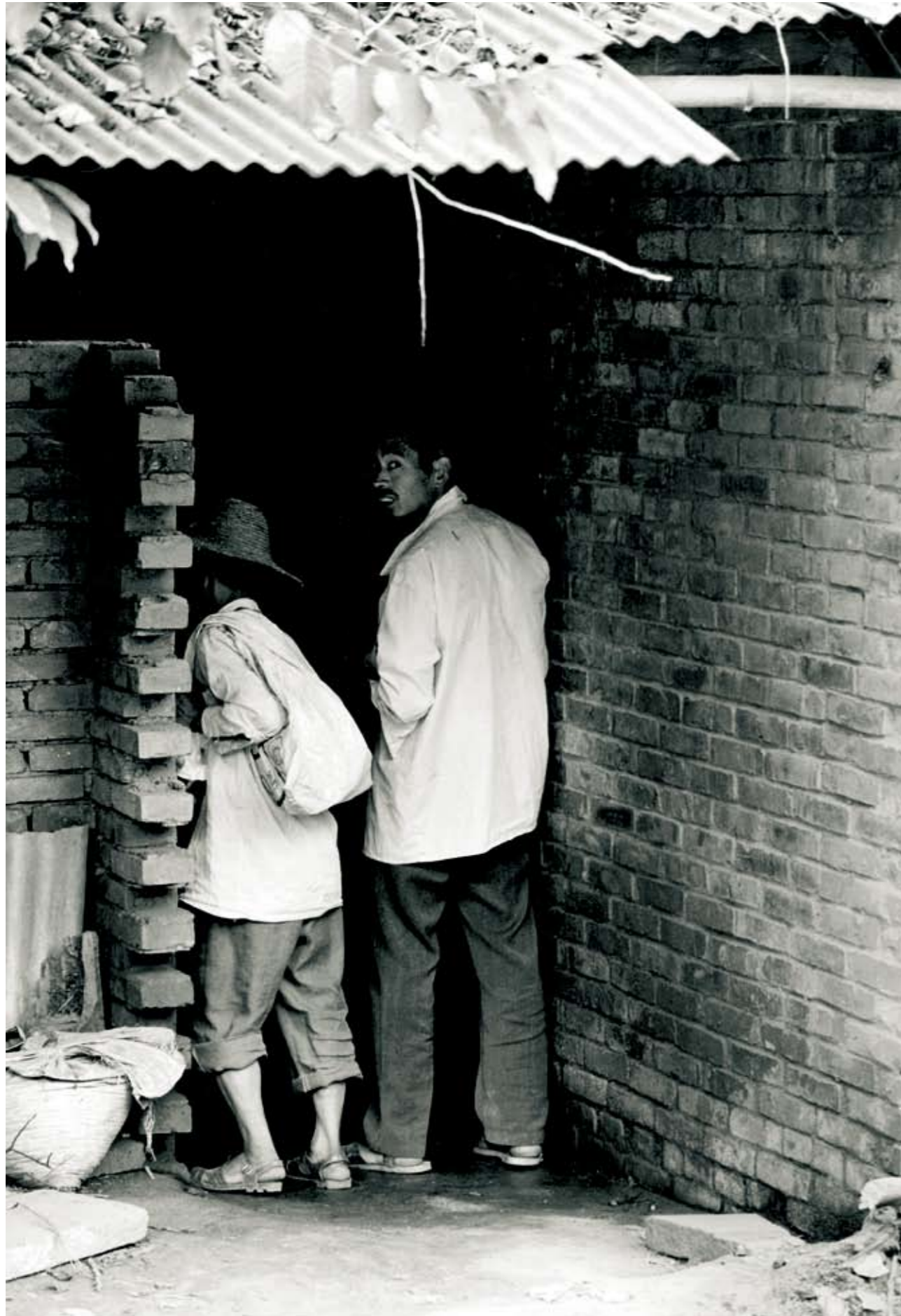


“Our family expenses are all come from my wife. She is brushing shoes outside. Our children couldn’t pay the school tuitions and we can’t buy any fertilizer for crops, If without the 300 Yuan remitted by my wife every month. I had visited my wife once. She and another eight women lived in a nine square meters shelter. They all slept on the ground share one bed cloth. My wife also cleaned tables and washed dishes for a restaurant, so she can get the leftovers. In this way, she can save more money. We peasants are not treated as human beings. Our life is worse than a pig’s!”



To the village fair

(This so called “bus” charges peasants one Yuan for one tickets, there is no load limitation for this “bus”. It takes many people as it can. Many accidents happened when people taking this “bus”.)



A toilet (without door) by the road

China is now in a robust process of constructing an social marketing economy. The mass media are also stepping into an era of marketing economies. If they want to survive in the marketing competition, they have to focus their attention on the social capital controller – the advertisement merchants and try to report things which can attract attentions of people with robust consumptive ability. Then the peasants, although they are big in number, they can bring no profit to the media. They become a group who can be easily ignored.

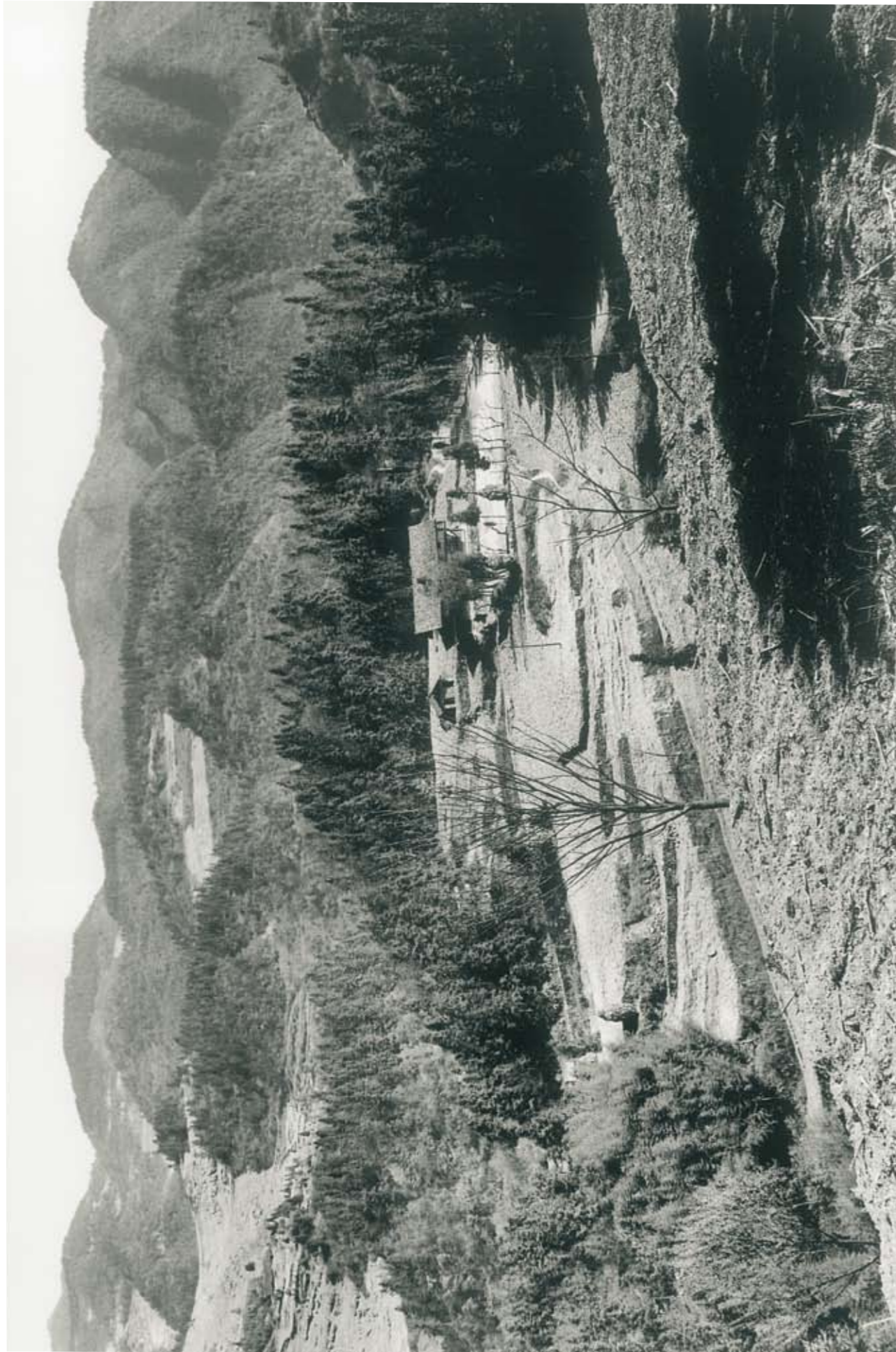


On September 24, 1984, Bai Yang gave a speech in the Lawa University. He said,

“For one hundred years, almost every dream of Chinese people has been broken. When they are given anticipation, they think that China will be more prosperous and their situation would be better. But the result is that it not only makes them disappointed but the things are worse. Another anticipation brings another disappointment and another worse situation. This kind of things happens again and again. One nation certainly lasts a long time, but an individual’s lifetime is short. How much anticipation will a man have in his lifetime? Looking forward to the future, they have no idea whether it would be bright or not...”

Village School

Gulan County, Sichuan, 2003



This interview is recorded by the photographer in Limin (means "for our people" in Chinese) school, Daxiong Group, Zhuman village, Gulan County, Sichuan province, China in March, 2003.



Photographer: What's your name, please?

A country teacher: Wang, Qiming Wang.

Photographer: A country teacher?

A country teacher: Yes.

Photographer: How much field do you work on?

A country teacher: One portion.

Photographer: Plant what?

A country teacher: Corn, and millet.

Photographer: You have to do some farming, don't you? How can you spare time for that?

A country teacher: On Sundays.

Photographer: Sunday? What about after class on weekdays?

A country teacher: I can't do farm work on weekdays.

Photographer: Then how can you do all the farm work with so little extra time?

A country teacher: The others in my family will help me.



Photographer: How many years have you been working as a country teacher?

A country teacher: For seventeen years.

Photographer: How much do you get paid every month?

A country teacher: About 200 RMB.

Photographer: Have you been working here all along?

A country teacher: Yes.

Photographer: Could you tell me the exact number of your salary?

A country teacher: 250 RMB.

Photographer: How about your meal? Do you make it yourself?

A country teacher: Yes, I cook it by myself.



Photographer: What about the students?

A country teacher: They go home for lunch.

Photographer: Then they come back to class after lunch, do they?

A country teacher: No, the class is from 10 a.m to 3 p.m. we don't have lunch time.

Photographer: So, you can't have lunch either. Do you take a rest or not?

A country teacher: No.

Photographer: are you the only teacher in this school?

A country teacher: Yes, there're two classes, over 20 students.

Photographer: How many courses do you take?

A country teacher: Chinese, math, music, physical exercises, and painting, all classes scribed by the central education administration.



Photographer: You teach all the courses. How?

A country teacher: One after another.

Photographer: When you are teaching one class, the others have to wait, is it?

A country teacher: No, I give them some class assignments. Then I can teach two classes at the same time.

Photographer: You keep on working from 10 a.m to 3 p.m without any break, is it? Can you stand that?

A country teacher: I've no other choice.

Photographer: How much were you paid when you first worked as a teacher?

A country teacher: In the beginning, it was 25 RMB, then 35, in 1998 it rose to 200, and now it is 250 RMB.

Photographer: Do you have any teacher welfare?

A country teacher: No.



Photographer: I heard that you have no textbooks, do you?

A country teacher: No. We don't have any. I'm worrying about this. Now I'm using the handouts written by myself.

Photographer: Why? I heard that the Center School (a public school in that area) is putting you in trouble, and they try to drive all the students to their school. Is that true?

A country teacher: Yes, that's the case.

Photographer: The Centre School is so far from here. The students have to live in the school if they study there. Do students have to pay extra money if they live in the School? Besides, these kids are too little to walk such a long way there!

A country teacher: Yes, it costs a lot in Center School. The peasants are too poor to afford the farm tools, not to mention this fee.



Photographer: Why not going to the Xinhua Bookstore (a public book store) for the textbooks directly?

A country teacher: We are not allowed to, unless we get permission from the Center School.

Photographer: It seems that the Center School deliberately holds back the textbooks in order to close this school, is that so?

A country teacher: Yes, it is!

Photographer: I don't understand why you can't buy twenty books from a bookstore. The bookstore is supposed to sell books.

A country teacher: We can't, unless we buy over 300 books,

Photographer: 300 books?



A country teacher: Yes, but we needn't that much.

Photographer: It seems to me that the Center School is too eager to see you down! Why not working in another school, since the situation is so tough here?

A country teacher: If I did so, what about these lovely students? I've no other choice. Only 200-odd RMB every month!

Photographer: The Center School looks so good, the teaching buildings and dormitories are beautiful, with board at school.

A country teacher: But that means more money! It's much more expensive than studying here.

A country teacher: Most students will have to give up studying when they go to the Centre School.



Photographer: What are the everyday living expenses in Center School?

A country teacher: About 2 RMB.

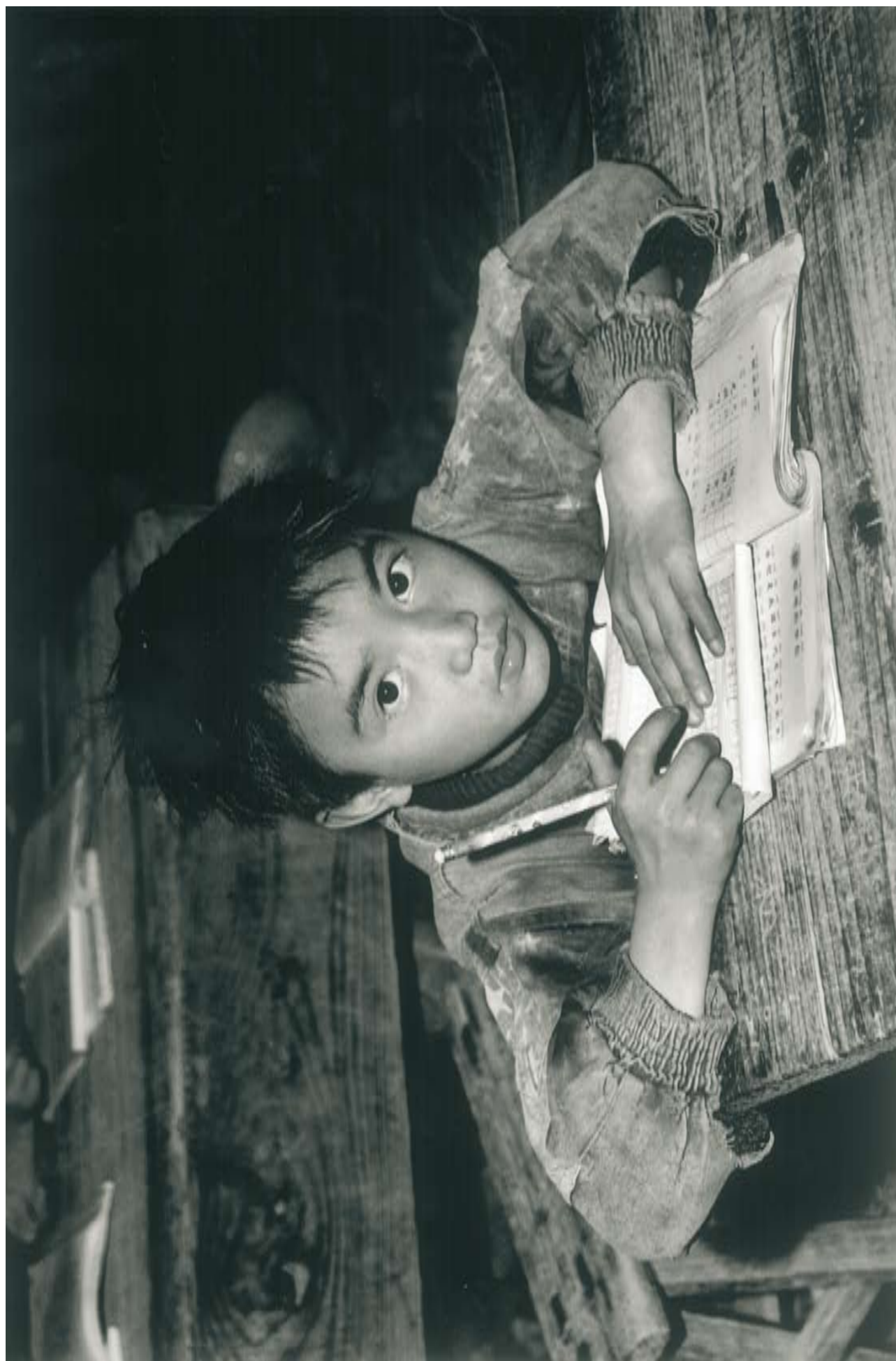
Photographer: Then how much for a month?

A country teacher: A lot, our students can't afford that!

Photographer: Compared with that in Center School, the tuition fee here is much lower. Is that so?

A country teacher: Yes. The students here only need to pay for the 250 RMB a month all together, about 10 Yuan per students per month.

Photographer: Having meals at home saves money! How is the meal in Center School?



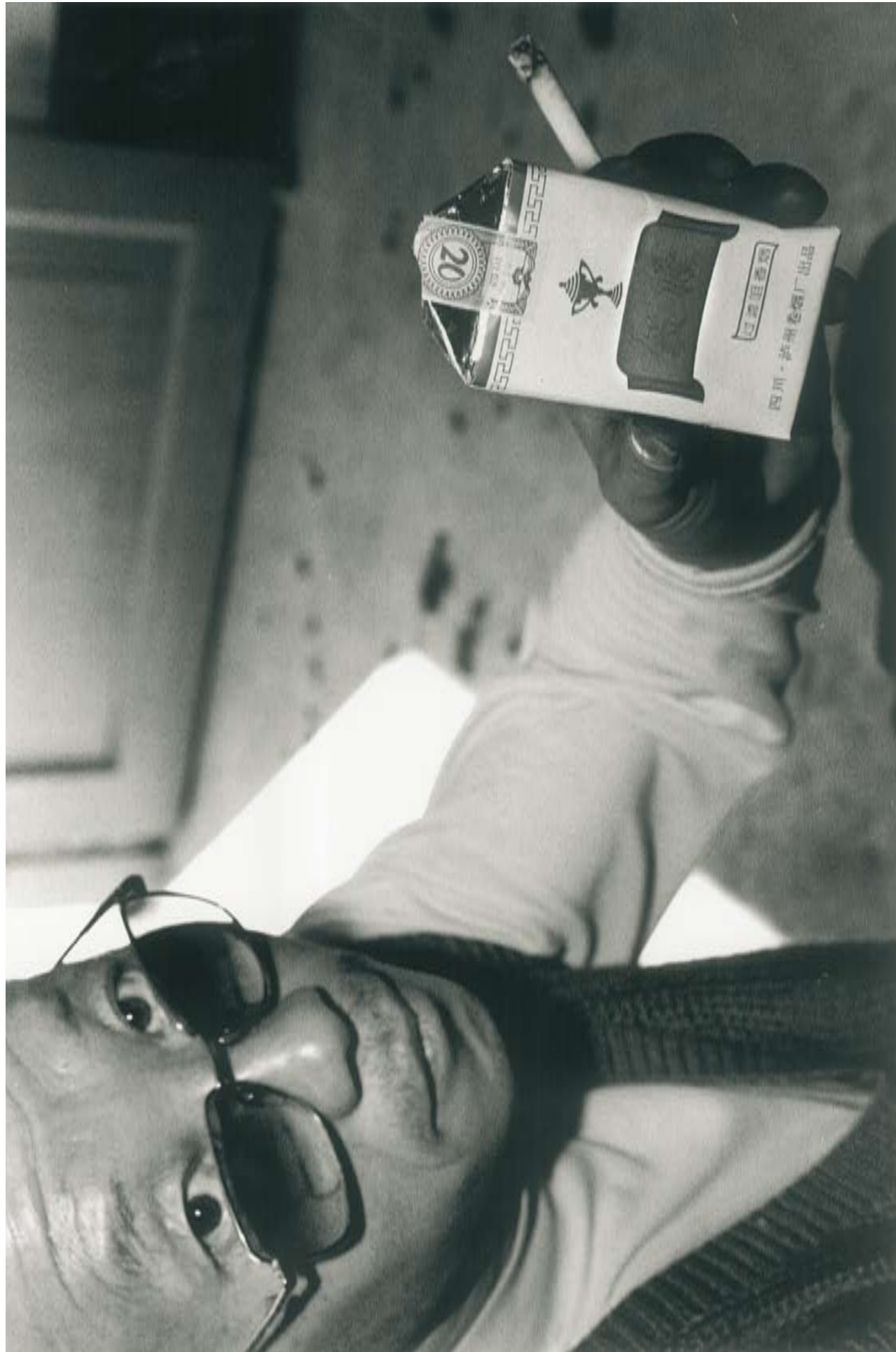
A country teacher: Not as good as we expected. Three dishes with one soup, almost all are salt Chinese cabbages!

Photographer: How far it is from the Center School! Are these little children afraid of walking such a long way all by oneself?

A country teacher: A little boy under six has started walking there everyday.

Photographer: I once walked for half an hour on that road. No one did I see! That almost frightened me!

A country teacher: Sometimes you couldn't see anyone for over an hour! That's really frightening! When it is foggy, the darkness makes the little children more terrified.



Photographer: What's your cigarette's brand name?

A country teacher: Hongjin.

Photographer: How much is it?

A country teacher: 1.50 RMB a pack.

Photographer: Is it a very common brand? How much would it cost for one month?

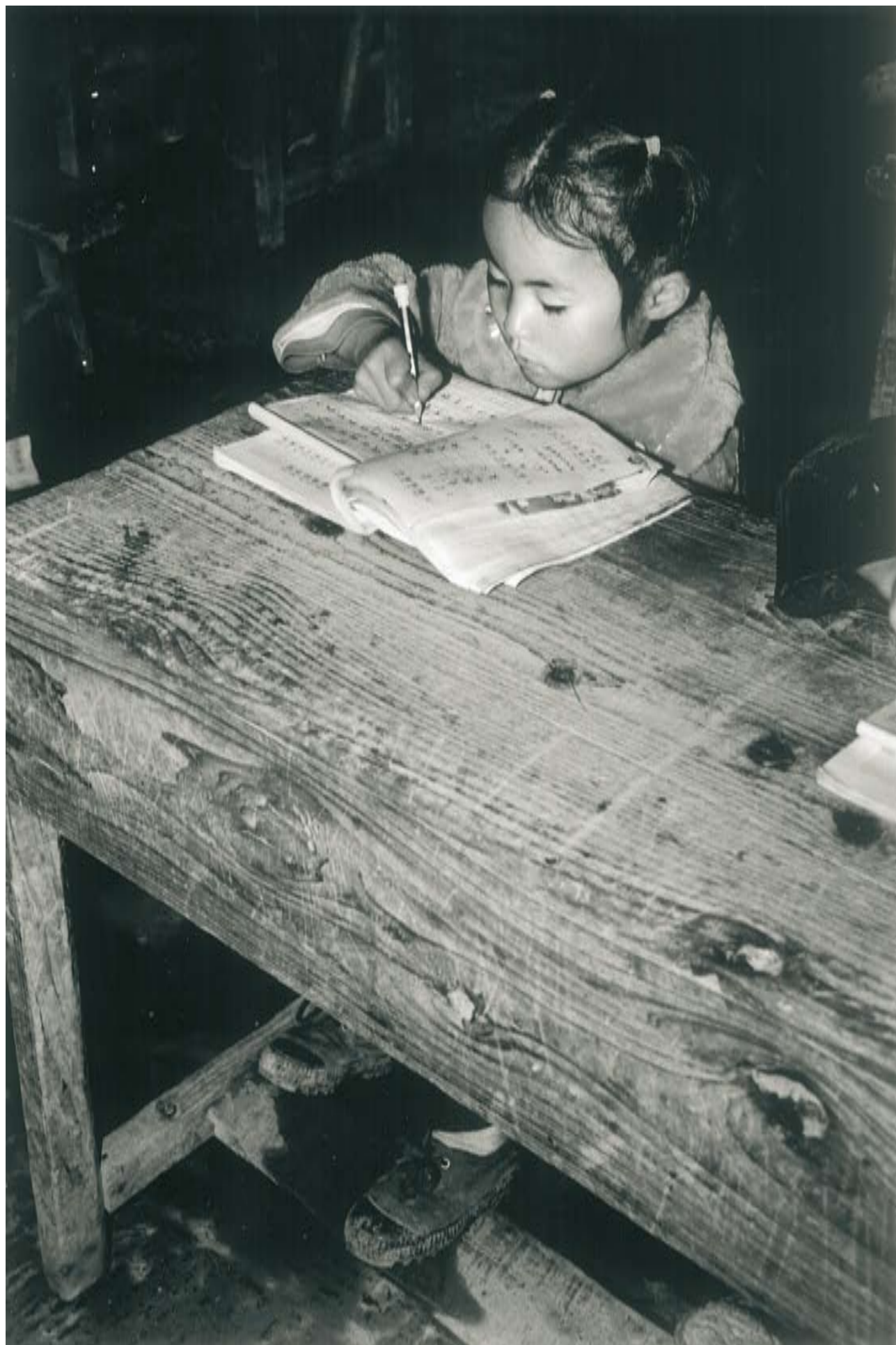
A country teacher: Er, it depends. Some are quite expensive; the dearest one is Jiaozi, is it?

Photographer: No, one brand called Panda costs thousands of RMB, Urbana guys usually smoke Tashan. It costs dozens of RMB.

A country teacher: I know that, it is twenty Yuan a pack!

Photographer: Most people here smoke this kind of cigarette, do they? Are there any cheaper cigarettes than this one?

A country teacher: Yes, 0.6 RMB a pack. I usually smoke that.



Photographer: Do you have a clock?

Peasant: No

Photographer: Then how can you know what the time is?

Peasant: In countryside, it's not necessary to know the time.

Photographer: How about going to school?

Peasant: She goes to school right after the breakfast.

Photographer: How long does it take?

Peasant: If walking fast, half an hour is enough, if slowly, it takes one hour.

Photographer: Does she have to carry the rice to school every week?

Peasant: Yes, about four jin or five each one.

Photographer: How about the dishes?

Peasant: Take the salted vegetables by herself.

Photographer: How much does she spend every month?

Peasant: About one yuan a day, if not including the rice.

Photographer: How many times can she have meat every week?

Peasant: when she is back home, she can have meat.

Carrying water

**Kongshan Village, Tongjiang, Sichuan Province,
China, 2003**



Photographer: Do you live in the mountain?

Peasant: Yeah.

Photographer: No electricity all along?

Peasant: No.

Photographer: Why not install the wire?

Peasant: We each have to pay three hundred Yuan for installing the wire.

Photographer: They won't install the wire unless you each pay three hundred Yuan, right?

Peasant: Yes, just for the place that we carry water from, we are required to pay more than five hundred yuan to the local government for the construction cost.

Photographer: Oh, five hundred yuan, just for the place I've seen.



Peasant: Yeah, five hundred yuan for each family.

Photographer: Then, is that enough to construct the pond?

Peasant: Eh, the other cost is about four hundred and fifty yuan for each one.

Photographer: Where do you carry water from when the pond has not yet been built?

Peasant: You can get to see it by yourself.

Photographer: On the foot of the mountain?

Peasant: Eh.

Photographer: Then, it will take you at least one hour or two to carry a bucket of water, right?

Peasant: More than that, at least three hours. That's impossible for the old to carry the water.



Photographer: A bucket of water weighs seventy jin or eight, right?

Peasant: Um! That bucket of water I carried today weighs one hundred jin at least.

Photographer: You need to walk three hours to carry the water which is as heavy as one hundred jin, don't you?

Peasant: Um.



Photographer: But as far as I know, most of the people who carry water are girls.

Peasant: Tha's right.

Photographer: where are the men?

Peasant: They have left for cities to earn money.

Photographer: How often do you carry the water?

Peasant: Twice a day, sometimes, once a day. Got to carry more when that is not enough..

Peasant workers in the city

Chongqing city, Chinese Spring Festival, 2002



To the city for a job

“All the young men have gone out to earn their living. The aged, the weak, the sick and the disabled have been left over to cope with the officials of the village and the town.”



Porters' Long Waiting for loading work on the dock in Chongqing. (These help people carry stuff by loading them on the shoulder with a stick, Chongqing citizen call them Bang Bang Jun)

“We 20 people share one room to live in. We spend one Yuan for three meals one day. We earn about 10 -30 Yuan a day. But it is also happened that we wait no work all day long, for more and more peasants come here to load stuff. The competition is becoming severe.”



“In our village, most of the families can’t afford tuition fee any more after their children have completed the middle school courses. Only one or two students manage to continue their study after middle school.

Many children who leave school would go outside to seek a living when they are still teenagers. Most of them can’t have any savings after years’ work, but can just earn enough to feed themselves. A lot of teenagers, who are still immature, would be lost easily or even commit crimes.”



Day-dreaming

These group of peasant workers are given a name: **Seasonal workers**, by Chinese mass medium. Originally, **Seasonal workers** refers to farmers who work in the city seasonally and go back home in the harvest seasons. In fact, most of farmer workers stay in the city for years, some of them only go home in the Spring Festival. But no matter how many years they have been working in the city, they can never be regarded as local citizens. What they can find is only temporary jobs without being admitted by any social welfare system. In recent years, more and more farmers pour into cities to seek a living. Issues like improving their living conditions, protecting their working rights and improving their children's education are becoming a pressing task for the government to complete.

A barefoot doctor

Gulan county, Sichuan, 2004

(Barefoot doctors are doctors in the countryside, who have not received systematical Medicine education. They learn Medicine by themselves. Usually they do not have an official certification.)



Photographer: Are you the barefoot doctor here?

Barefoot Doctor: Yes.

Photographer: How many years have you been a doctor?

Barefoot Doctor: twenty or thirty years.

Photographer: How old are you?

Barefoot Doctor: Over sixty, sixty five.

Photographer: Do all the people around come here to you to get medical help?

Barefoot Doctor: Yes.

Photographer: How do you treat them?

Barefoot Doctor: Take the pulse and ...

Photographer: Take the pulse? You mean traditional Chinese Medical way?

Barefoot Doctor: Yes, and I use also use western medicine beside medical herbs.

Photographer: You pick the herbs by yourself, is it?

Barefoot Doctor: Yes, by myself.

Photographer: How much does it cost for one prescription?

Barefoot Doctor: En, usually quite cheap, about 2 RMB.



Photographer: Have you ever written out a prescription for men?(pointed at one patient)

Barefoot Doctor: Yes, I have.

Photographer: Do these herbs work?

Barefoot Doctor: Yes, it works. Common cold, vomiting, headache, body ache, it can give some treatment to all of these diseases.

Photographer: Are there many patients coming to see you?

Barefoot Doctor: Yes, lots of.



A herbal medicine stall – Peasants in the village usually buy herbal medicine here to treat disease. It is only 0.15 dollars for each pack.

Photographer: I saw most people here use the medicinal herbs, why do few people choose western medicine?

Barefoot Doctor: People in the countryside don't dare to use it. We still trust our herbs. Besides, the western medicine is too expensive.



A stall for TCM treatment by a road



Peasants are buying western medicine

They buy them by pills, 5 cents for one pill. These medicines are often the expired pills in cities.



Photographer: What disease can you treat?

Barefoot Doctor: I can treat almost all the common diseases except severe wounds.

Photographer: Except severe wounds? Then how far it is from the nearest village clinic?

Barefoot Doctor: I've never tried to walk there, at least 30 li. A small hospital, just a branch!

Photographer: A branch? Then you have to go to the county for severe wounds?

Barefoot Doctor: Yes, but I've cured a serious case. A man's head was broken, with a big wound on it. I managed to sew it up.

Photographer: Did you?

Barefoot Doctor: Yes, another man cut his leg when packing pigweeds. His tendon is broken.

Photographer: You dare to treat the broken tendons?

Barefoot Doctor: Yes, paste medicinal herbs all over. I also give him an intravenous drip too, twice a day.

Photographer: Did he get the drip here?

Barefoot Doctor: No, in his own house.



Acupuncture – using fine needle to pricking the tissues of human body to cure diseases

Photographer: Why not going to the public hospitals? Is it because he can't afford the expenses?

Barefoot Doctor: Yes, it is too expensive.

Photographer: Is that many sick people can't afford to go to the public hospitals?

Barefoot Doctor: Yes, but I can handle common diseases, and the inoculation for children,

Photographer: Then most patients go to you for help.

Barefoot Doctor: Yes, I try my best.



Moxibustion - burning the moxa stick which is of herbal medicine on a certain area of skin to cure diseases (a kind of traditional Chinese medical therapy).



Moxibustion with medical wine in the bottle



Cupping—Pour some strong drink in the drink jar, light the drink, then attach the jar immediately on the focal area to take the pathogenic evil out of the body in order to cure disease. (a kind of traditional Chinese medical therapy). 0.13 Us cents for one Cup.

“Good corn seeds”

Goujia Village, Chongqing, Dec, 2002



Photographer: How is the harvest this year?

Peasant: Very poor. We bought fake seeds.

Peasant: We bought the seeds from the village government. It is called "good corn seed". They got it from the "Seed Research Centre" in the county, and they force us to buy it.

Photographer: How much is the seed?

Peasant: The seed is six yuan for one jin. We got very little harvest from these "good corn seeds" on thousands of farmland, about only twenty or thirty Jin for each Mu. This even can not make up the money for buying the seeds.



Peasant: Photographer: Did some authorities come to investigate this?

Peasant: No, nobody.

Photographer: Who is in charge of the Seeds Centre?

Peasant: We don't know, our village government knows.

Photographer: Why didn't you buy other kind of seeds at that time?

Peasant: We don't know which kind of seed is good. The village government said it is "good corn seed", so we bought it.



Photographer: Why don't you sue the people who bring you the disaster?

Peasant: No, we dare not

Peasant: If we dared to sue them and the high level officials come here to investigate this, they would go to the village government first. Then those people would know who said bad words about them. In this way, who dare to sue them? Nobody! If you do, you get punished!



Corns produced by the “good corn seeds”

Photographer: Do you have to pay taxes with such a poor harvest?

Peasant: Absolutely, they have come to us for several times. We got so little harvest. We have no food to feed pigs, no pigs to be sold for money, no money for rice. What a life!

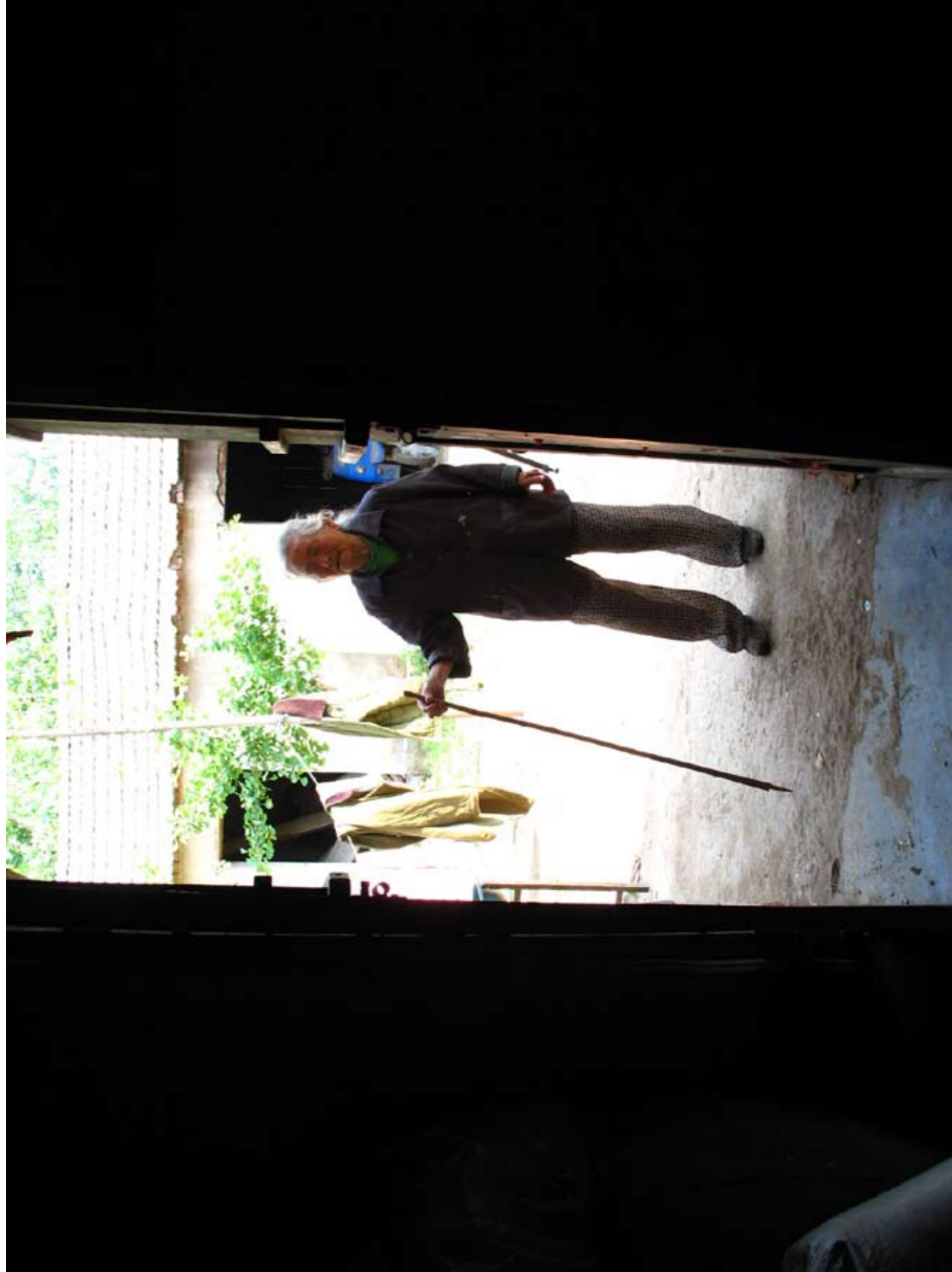
Lukou village 70, Xinyi,

Jiangsu Province

May, 2006, China



Lukou vlillage 70, a remote countyard.



Blind Grandma was waiting for her granddaughter, Little Hu Zhaofeng. The girl, 14 years old, a grade five student in primary school, was supposed to be back home after five o'clock. Now it was half past six, she still hadn't shown up. It was she who took full responsibilities preparing three meals every day. Her blind grandpa, 84, now was waiting for her worriedly.

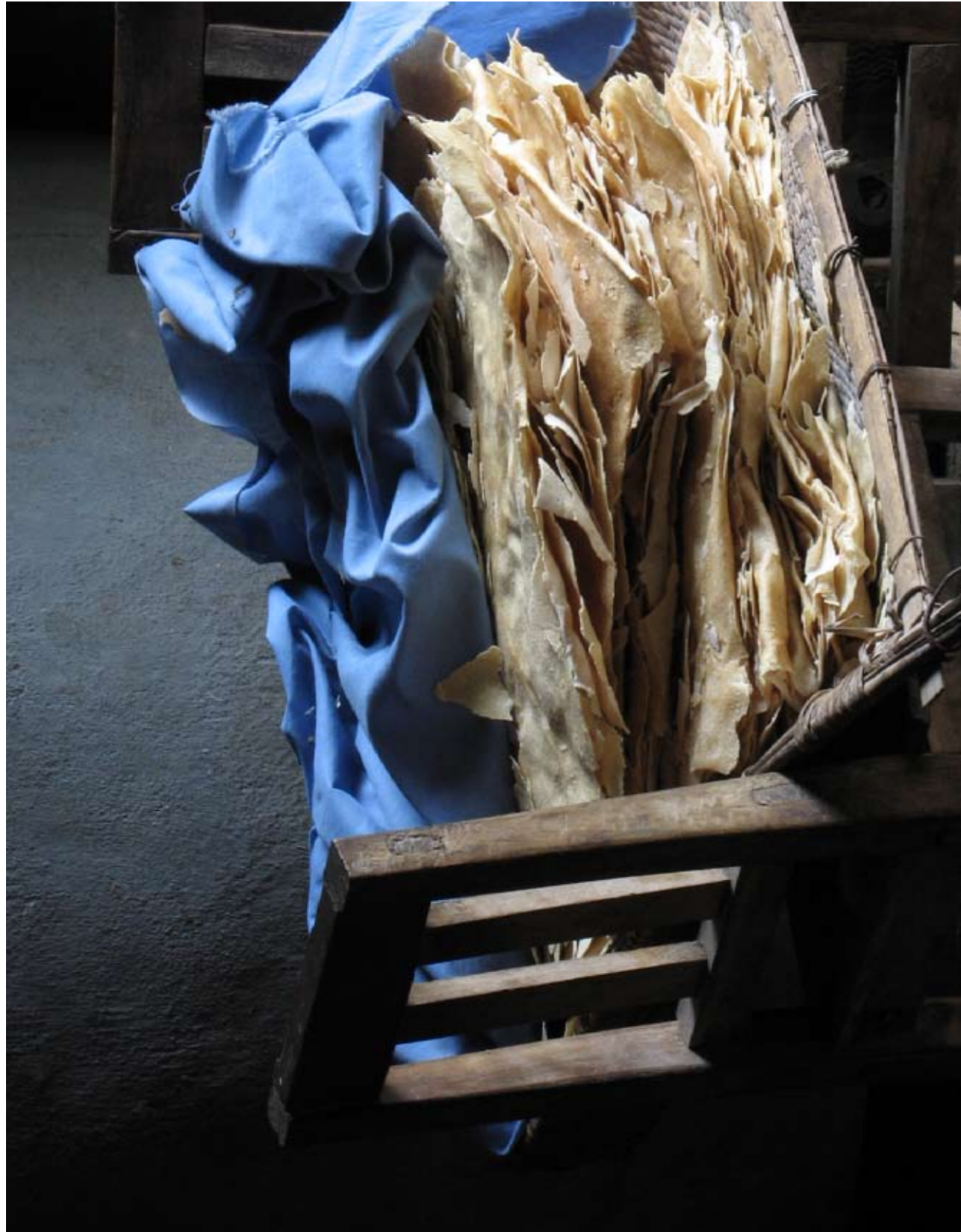
When Little Zhaofeng was only eight months old, her mother left her and never came back. Then left her father eight years ago who planned to search for living in the outer world. All through these eight years, his father remitted them for three times. The first remittance is 200 yuan, and the next 400 yuan, but they didn't get the third remittance for blind grandpa's daughter diverted the 300 yuan. The daughter's husband is ill but they had no money to take him to the hospital, thus when the daughter was asked to help to get the money, she diverted the 300 yuan to cure his husband.



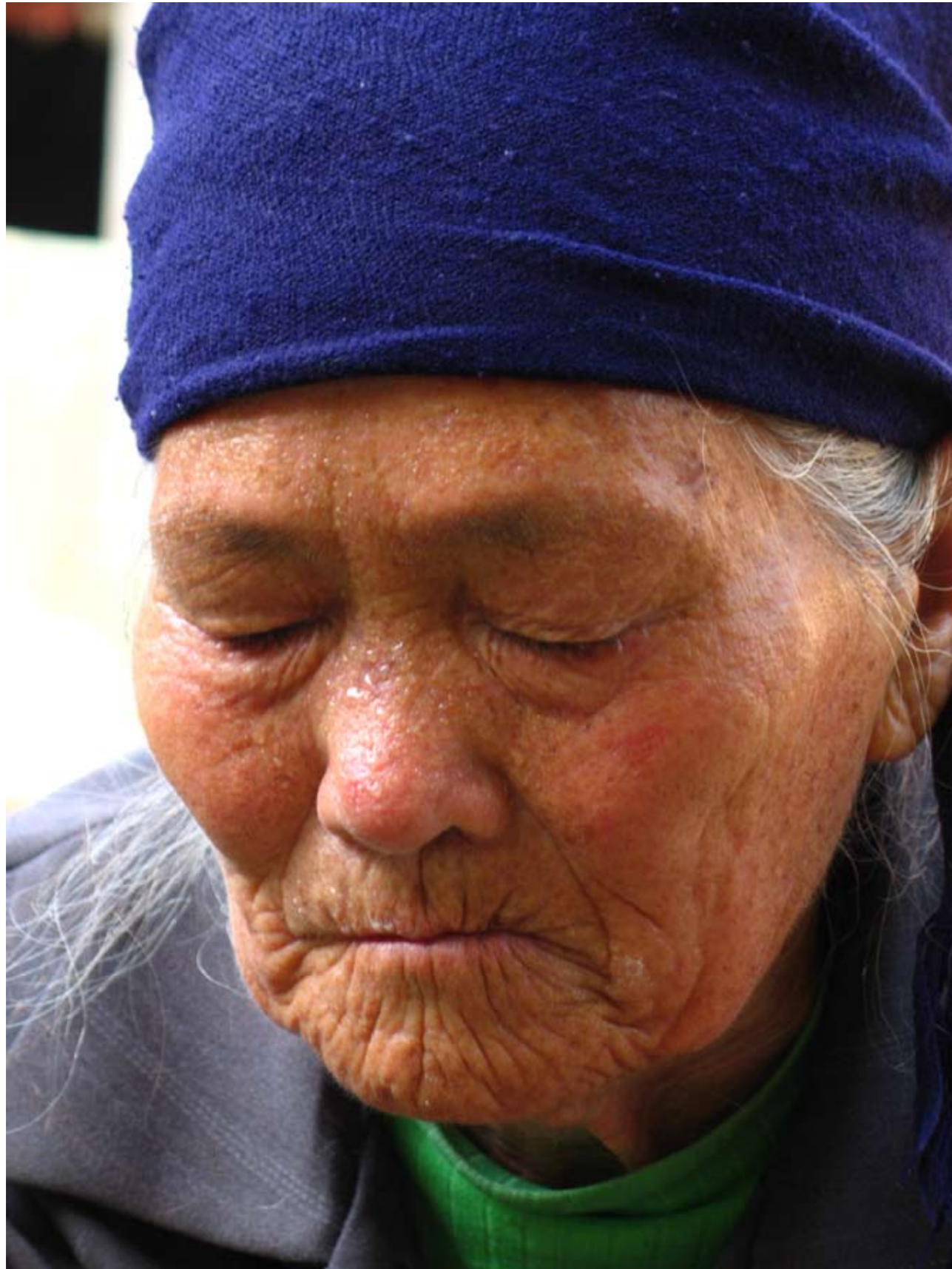
It was already seven o'clock when I went to the blind grandpa' home again. I happened to meet Zhaofeng with a school bag at their gate. As soon as she entered home and put down her school bag, she got the pan and prepared the rice. Then she started to wash a cabbage which is going to be the only dish that evening. I noticed that the moment Zhaofeng got home; she kept busy with the housework.

Only at the intervals of frying the cabbage, she managed to lean her head to the wall to relax her exhausted body for a while....

Later, she got the pan off the fire and checked it, but it was not ready yet, so she put the pan back to the fire. She checked it again after a while, and then again... during she was doing this, I noticed she leaned to the wall once and again. I knew she was too tired...



When dinner was ready, the blind grandpa was already very hungry. She ate the shabby meal looking rather satisfied. Little Zhaofeng then got two pieces of Chinese pancake for her own supper. I visited blind grandpa all the next several days. Their first dinner I came across was the cabbage I mentioned above; the next day's lunch was fried potato and green pepper, dinner that day was some leftover. The third day's lunch was only the green pepper...Little Zhaofeng ate very little rice and rarely dish in every meal. I wanted to find out what Little Zhaofeng ate for breakfast, but I have to rise up before five o'clock in order to see that. I asked blind grandpa. She told me that Zhaofeng eat some noodles left in last supper.

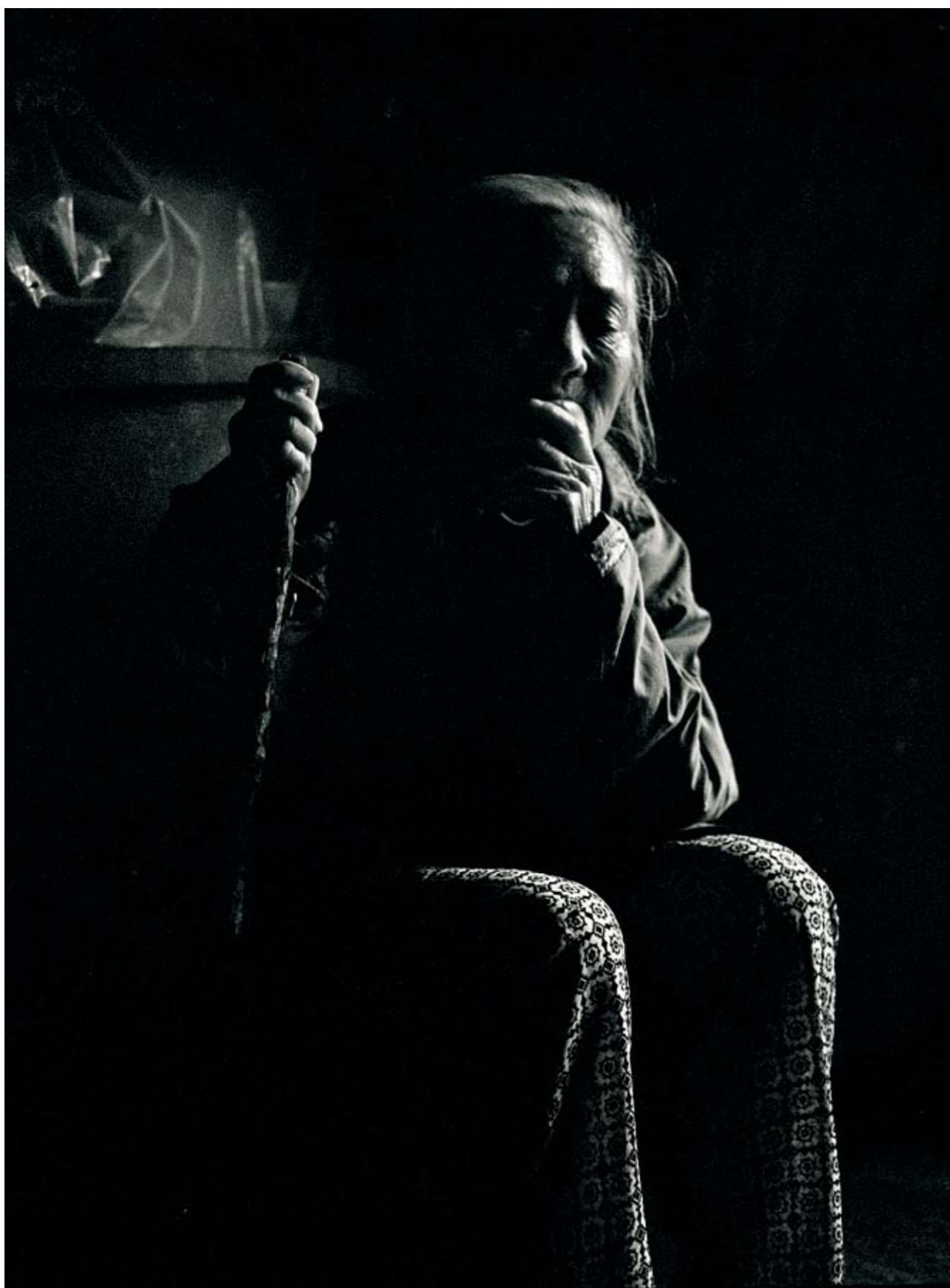


That noon I went to blind grandma again and chatted with her. She told me her story that day: her eye was beat to blindness by her second daughter-in-law 14 years ago. During those time, she took her little granddaughter, Little Zhaofeng, begged for food from door to door. They were lucky to have friendly neighborhoods. People in their village were kind and willing to share food with them. But their suffering was far from the end. Her husband committed suicide for unbearable sorrows in his life...



I wanted to know more about their life make a documentation of it, so I visited them and chatted with blind grandma all through more than 20 days. In order to do my work, I have to stay at their dim and damp cottage for about six to eight hours. The third day after I started my documentation, I found it difficult to eat any food that evening. Villagers also noticed my troubles. They asked me why I was so gloomy. I did know how to answer them...

Ten days later I started to feel sick and severely weak, yes, I felt I was so weak and frail...



Blind grandma told me that she started begging for food at eight with her cousin. They started from Shandong, a province in the north part China, all the way of begging to the south. When she was 14, the sixth years of her begging, she and her cousin reached Jiangsu province which is thousands of miles away from their home. Here they came across a sick man of more than 50. Her cousin got three yuan from this sick man and left. She stayed and married this man who had to take much Chinese traditional medicine every day.



After she gave birth to two boys, the sick man died. After that she accidentally visited a family with three unmarried sons. They gave her a Pantou so she became the wife of all the three sons. She gave birth to four children in this family. The home she now had was from her third marriage. She still got nothing valuable in the cottage, but four children with the man who killed herself by drinking the agricultural chemical.



The second daughter-in-law beat her blind and ran away because the unbearable poverty in the family, so did the third daughter-in-law. Her first son didn't manage to get a girl to marry him. She also had a daughter which is mentioned above in the remittance. Blind grandma said during that time even the bark was eaten up by the starving people. Every tree people can see was bare. She even came across one eating his clothes. There was still one time she ate a Baozi and the second day she was told it was made by human's flesh!

Blind grandma also told me her three sons all had dig coal in mines but the third son came back after spitting blood because of severe exhaustion. Still dozens of villagers worked in the mine at the risk of being buried by the coal any time. Those people, working at the danger of their life, could gain about 2000 yuan each month. Now they become the richest people in the village. Blind grandpa professed Christian. She often sang christian songs when she was alone. Her songs seemed sadly beautiful to me. She sang even in toothache. God really wish her to be happy.



I found blind grandma very sensitive. She could tell by when I started to video after I documented them for one week. When she heard the sound of the machine, she would ask : “ are you videoing again?” when we moved to the second week, I met my blind spot in the documentation. I think it over painfully. When I was thinking deeply and kept silence for a long time, blind grandma would say without seeing me : “ you are worried again.” Then she continued: “worry a while, grey a little...

Blind grandma and her three sons didn't have any farmland now. All through those years tilling had been unprofitable at all, so they returned their farmland to the village administration. Her sons then left home to find jobs. Since 2005 when Chinese central government canceled the agricultural tax and peasants could gain some profit from tilling. So they wanted their farmland back. But the village administration controlled the farmlands and rented them out by 200 yuan each year. ”

Actually the rent from the farmland did not summit to the central government at all. Now, the village administration controlled hundreds of Mu of farmland, but they refused to return the farmland to the peasants.



There are five people in blind grandma's family without any farmland, so everything they ate should be bought with money. How badly they want to get their farmland back! It was supposed to belong to them!

She wanted the farmland so eagerly that she even asked me, "Can we get our farmland back after you finished the video?" I didn't know how to answer her, so I had to say, "I am not sure."

In the second week of my documentating, I told blind grandpa accidentally that I like Mantou. The next day, I saw Little Zhaofeng leaven much dough and that evening I ate two Mantou. It was the first time I ate something in their home. Although they always sincerely invited me to eat something when they had meal, I could not make it at all. I told Little Zhaofeng when I ate the Mantou: "What if I could have Mantou everyday!" on hearing these words, she looked at me rather surprised and with a sort of despise. She said to: "How could you have a life goal of having Mantou!"

Postscript

Rodin's remarks,

Sometimes it may cost great effort only to express a little part of what the artist thinks and feel, if those who take a sceptical attitude realize this they will not wonder any more whether the spirit plainly expressed in the picture is what the artist wants to display out of conscience.

For when he dyes the material world with this ideal he aroused myriads of feeling in audience's mind. He makes them discover their spiritual treasure that they have never realized before. He teaches them to love life with new reasons and light the way with new inner brightness.

A brief introduction to the photographer

The photographer was graduated from Bei Jing film college, majoring in picture photographing. In 1980s, as a permanent photographer of WWF and the first wild animal photographer in China, he spent six years in deep forests taking photos of wild pandas. These photos have been exhibited in many places in China. They are collected in albums and are published in China and Canada, and have gained various awards.

From 1997 to 2006, the photographer constantly visited Chinese countryside and lived with the peasants, making great endeavors in registering Chinese peasants' life.

At present, the photographer pursues in taking theme photos and filming documentaries.



Sincere thanks to people who agreed to be photographed and interviewed. Their sincerity and courage are appreciated.

Nov, 2006

Yimin. Hou

hou1891@vip.sina.com

