A Ming Landscape: Settlement, Land Use, Labor, and Estheticism in T’ai-ho County, Kiangsi

JOHN W. DARDESS
University of Kansas

T’AI-HO county lies astride the Kan River, the central waterway of Kiangsi province. It is about 150 miles south of the provincial capital, Nan-ch’ang. Earlier, I made a study of the social demography of T’ai-ho in Ming times, using necrologies written mainly by the T’ai-ho literati for their own co-locals.¹ My purpose here is to use the writings mostly of these same literati to recover the landscape those people lived in, to find out how the land was used and how it was appreciated. The collected works of some nineteen native literati (most of whom were imperial officials) contain a large enough number of poems and essays and other remarks describing the native habitat and its uses, making at least the beginnings of such a recovery possible.

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The following abbreviations are used in this article:

CAFC Chi-an fu-chih 吉安府志 (1875)
CHTC Chiang-hsi t’ung-chih 江西通志 (1881)
SKGSCP Ssu-k’u ch’u-an-shu chen-pen 四庫全書珍本
THHC T’ai-ho hsien-chih 泰和縣志 (1879)

The available information suggests a division of this paper into three parts: (1) forms of settlement in the early Ming; (2) patterns of land use in the early Ming; and (3) changing perceptions and evaluations of landscape through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, i.e. late Ming and early Ch’ing.

The first part tries to probe beneath the formal fiscal and administrative demarcations of territory to reconstruct as much as possible of the actual physical characteristics of T’ai-ho city and its suburbs, and of the various kinds of hamlets, residences, and estates in the countryside. The second part, taking settlements of all kinds and sizes as focal points, aims to show how the landscape beyond those points was organized for subsistence purposes into zones of intensive gardening, of less intensive field agriculture, and of truly extensive hunting, gathering, and grazing. The third part deals with a distinct change in the ways in which the literati appreciated and handled landscape over the course of the Ming and early Ch’ing. After the sixteenth century, interest in workaday landscapes faded away. Enthusiasm for landscape shifted from the actual to the ethereal and artificial. How and why this revolution took place is an interesting question, one that has links to the political, social, and intellectual developments of the times.

It must be emphasized at the outset that T’ai-ho’s literati at all times, early or late, wrote not as localists but as standard-bearers of a national literary and esthetic tradition. Early in the Ming especially, their devotion to their native county expressed a tangible sense of place within a cosmopolitan civilization, not a localism in defiance of it. Their language contained no dialect. It was fully comprehensible to outsiders. Yet because their choice and handling of topics were matters very much in line with tracks already well marked out in the Chinese literary tradition, one is never entirely sure whether the writers’ use of standard cliché is in any given instance mendacious, or appropriate for the actual scene at hand. Generally it appears that the primary sources are reliably ‘‘realistic.’’ The crucial limitation is not accuracy per se, but the individual writer’s sense of selection and mode of interpretation.
CENTERS OF SETTLEMENT

In the political landscape of the Ming era, T’ai-ho was one of nine counties that together comprised Chi-an prefecture. Certainly in a very broad sense, Kiangsi province and Chi-an prefecture may be thought of as centers of settlement. In Sung times (960–1279), that prefecture truly served, in administrative fact as well as in the social consciousness of the elite, as a principal center of civilized life and as a receptacle for the most intense feelings of local loyalty, of national patriotism, and of native literary tradition. In the Sung, people boasted of “our Chi” or “our Lu-ling,” whatever their actual county of residence within the prefecture. A history of Chi-an prefecture in the Sung would be feasible. Chaffee touches upon it.² Hymes has executed a study in the social history of the elite of a neighboring Kiangsi prefecture—Fu-chou—in the Sung era.³

Yet it would be very difficult, perhaps impossible, to write history with a coherent prefectural focus such as that for the Ming. Somewhere between the end of the Sung in 1279 and the formation of the Ming in 1368, Chi-an prefecture broke apart in all respects save for its administrative function as a level of control in the apparatus of the imperial state. Thus whereas in the Sung the literati of T’ai-ho county were, as far as one can tell, culturally and socially indistinguishable from the greater Lu-ling literati, from around the middle of the fourteenth century there emerges a wholly independent T’ai-ho literature whose authors emphatically considered themselves natives of “our T’ai-ho,” and took little interest in either Chi-an prefecture or Kiangsi province. The forces responsible for this fragmentation remain to be explored. It was only after the dust had cleared that the T’ai-ho literati really began to write in quantity, and so the story must begin with the late Yuan and early Ming, with T’ai-ho county itself serving as the maximum unit of settlement.

T’ai-ho county was (and is) not especially small. According to the latest available measurements (1982), it is 1,028 square miles in

T'AI-HO COUNTY IN THE MING: CANTONS AND TOWNSHIPS
T'AI-HO CITY AND ITS SUBURB IN MING TIMES: 1) to township 56 and P'ou-t'ang k'ou 2) Hollow street (Ao chieh) 3) Kao-ying lane 4) Moat-head lane (Hao-t'ou hsiang) 5) Old Well lane (Ku-ching hsiang) 6) Fishpond lane (Yü-ch'ih hsiang) 7) Grass Garden lane (Mao-yuan hsiang) 8) Back street (Hou chieh) 9) Refined Creek (Hsiu-ch'i) 10) Lane of Successful Officials (Ch’iu-tzu hsiang) 11) County magistrate's office 12) Happy tower (K’uai-ko) 13) Clear Creek (Ch’ing-ch’i)
size, or about eighty-five percent the size of the state of Rhode Island (1,214 square miles). It stretches some 75 miles east to west, and is about 30 miles deep at its thickest point north to south. Its original creation dates to the third century A.D. In 591, it was re-named T’ai-ho, which is traditionally explained to mean ‘‘prosperous and temperate,’’ after its good grain and mild atmosphere.

T’ai-ho county had six second-echelon units called hsiang, or cantons. These had no known use in the Ming period other than as general references, imposing a high-order intelligibility upon the landscape, inasmuch as on the whole they were physiographically coherent units. Several cantons took in a principal Kan river tributary and its feeders, each forming a natural network for settlement and communication. The main exception was the ‘‘metropolitan’’ canton, Ch’ien-ch’iu (‘‘Thousand Autumns’’), with the county seat at its center. Its focus was the Kan river itself, including an incoherent jumble of small streams emptying directly into the Kan, plus the lower reaches of several major tributaries.

The six cantons were in turn chopped into seventy third-echelon units called tu, or townships. These were numbered consecutively. Beginning with the canton of Jen-shan (‘‘Benevolent and Good’’) in the northeast, imperial officials placed tu number 1 in the first cropland below the watershed of the Jen-shan river. Then they platted downstream, fixing number 6 at the confluence of the Jen-shan with the Hsien-ch’a (‘‘Immortals’ Raft’’), about a mile from where the joined streams empty into the Kan. Numbers 7 and 8 were then assigned to some small, eccentric stream valleys nearby. Then, starting with number 9, they platted upstream along the Hsien-ch’a, and so through the rest of the county, down one stream and up the next, insofar as topography permitted. The last was tu number 70, in the canton of Kao-hsing (‘‘High and Flourishing’’) in the extreme west. The townships served as quota assignment

6 I follow Brook’s nomenclature. Timothy Brook, ‘‘The Spatial Structure of Ming Local Administration,’’ Late Imperial China 6 (1985), No. 1, pp. 1-55. The data are from THHC 2.14b-18a.
areas for services and taxes. Although their exact boundaries can no longer be determined, some seem to have encompassed several square miles of crop and residential land.

At the bottom of the fiscal-administrative hierarchy lay some 250 rural wards, in T’ai-ho called li. Although county, cantons, townships, and wards together made up what is nowadays technically known as a “nested” hierarchy of units, the wards as lowest-order units were clearly something more than administrative abstractions. They were creatures of compromise between imperial needs and local custom. The influence of localism is evident in the way the wards were named. Many were named after local topographic features—for example Shan-t’ien (“Mountain Field”), Nan-k’eng (“South Hollow”), Lo-chiang (“Snail River”) and the like. Several wards were concurrently known by more than one name: T’ao-yuan (“Peach Spring”), Ssu-hsia (“Below the Buddhist Temple”), and Shih-t’ai (“Stone Platform”) are all one and the same ward in township number 12. Other wards had concurrently varying renderings in script: Shen-ch’i is alternately “Deep Creek” and “Sash Creek” in township number 4. There also existed duplicates and even triplicates of the same name: T’ai-ho had three different “South Creek” wards. Ward names commonly served as choronyms for dominant local kinship groups—for example the Sha-ts’un (“Sand Hamlet”) Liu, the Shan-t’ien Yin, etc.

Upon this unsystematic assemblage of vernacular toponymy, the early Ming imperial state tried to impose a measure of uniformity and control, not by redesigning the microgeography, but by treating each ward as though it were also a uniform population unit, each consisting in 110 taxpaying households as its core.7 It then grouped these theoretically uniform wards into the serially numbered townships. Each township, however, contained anywhere from one to twelve wards, a range which seems to have reflected cropland availability and fertility and hence population density in different parts of the county. During the Ming, the total number of wards wavered between 250 and 260.

7 An understanding reflected, for example, in Kuo Tzu-chang’s statement of 1607 that T’ai-ho’s “population (hu-k’ou) numbered over 250 li.” Kuo Tzu-chang 郭子章, Ch’ing-lo kung i-shu 青蝶公遺書 (T’ai-ho, 1882), 18.15b–16b.
Although modern, detailed maps show many of these old wards as discrete dots, suggesting punctiform "villages," it is clear that in the Ming they were in fact microregions and not settlements as such. They included within them the actual, physical settlements that were points of departure for land-use systems.

Of these actual settlements, the largest was the little walled city that served as the county seat. In the Ming, it was known simply as T'ai-ho, just like the county. It sat on prime alluvial land on the north shore of the Kan, not directly on the water, but slightly inland, so as to escape flooding and erosion. According to local record, it was first walled and moated in the year 787. Although the moat (called Hsiu-ch'i, "Refined Creek") was redug and the walls rebuilt several times in the following centuries, the city proper seems to have occupied a fairly constant space until 1939, when it was made the temporary wartime capital of Kiangsi province, and for a while ballooned almost beyond recognition.8

In the Ming, the area within the walls (about a third of a square mile) together with an outer extension of suburban and farming space, was designated for fiscal purposes as township number 45. There was no further subdivision into fiscal wards (li), however. Instead, the city featured different systems of localizing arrangements. The roughest breakdown was "city east" and "city west," whose point of separation was the magistrate's yamen, located near the west wall. Urban wards (fang) were occasionally mentioned by name by the Ming literati, but these apparently were no longer officially functional. Streets (chieh) and lanes (hsiang) of the city and its suburbs were officially recognized, at least as addresses. The county gazetteer of 1879 provides a list of these, and it is possible to draw an approximate map of their layout based upon the verbal descriptions of their locations.

It is odd that while official lists of degree winners from the city provide street or lane addresses in most cases, the local literati seldom follow suit. Instead they deploy a fuzzier toponymy, either the vague east or west distinction, or the old fang names, or names of

8 Hubert S. Liang, "What the War Did to Kiangsi," Asia (June, 1942): 363–64. A Japanese estimate of 1918 gave 3,000 as the approximate size of the city population; see Shina shōhetsu zenshi (Tōa dōbunkai, 1918), vol. 11, pp. 159–60.
neighborhoods like Liu-ch’i (‘‘Willow Creek’’) or Hsiu-ch’i, which may not figure as official addresses at all. For example, officially the Wangs lived on suburban Hollow Street and the Liangs on Moat-head Lane, but they and their literary friends invariably speak of the Wangs of City West and the Liangs of Willow Creek. (When writing of people and landscape in the countryside, the literati often refer to the cantons and wards, but never to the serially numbered townships.)

In the Ming and Ch’ing, the city proper had a roughly oblong shape, with an interior network of streets and lanes that featured many odd bends and irregularities. Public buildings were placed erratically. Certainly the forces of traditional urban planning had been weak here.

The streets were narrow, at best wide enough to admit the horsecarts that, in the Ming period, daily hauled in produce from the countryside. The residential lanes were very narrow. The whole effect was one of great density and crowding. Nieuhoff, accompanying a Dutch embassy up the Kan in April 1655, described T’ai-ho as a small city, set in a ‘‘charming’’ countryside, with well-paved but very small and narrow streets.9 Four centuries earlier, urban congestion was already evident here; Yang Wan-li (1127–1206) wrote that a multistory structure owned by one Ch’en Ch’eng, though near the Kan river, afforded him no prospect on it, because ‘‘hundreds of houses belonging to people living in the market block out the view.’’10

People lived in the city for reasons of livelihood. Some lines of work required a certain density of clients or customers, and some people prospered in one or another of these lines. In the fifteenth century, the family of Ch’en Hsun, whose fortunes were based on land speculation and grain-dealing, lived on the east side of the city ‘‘intermixed with the other classes of people,’’ their buildings ‘‘packed like fishscales’’ against those of their neighbors. But willow and sophora trees shaded the front eave, and a studio was placed in


10 Yang Wan-li 楊萬里 (1127–1206), Ch’eng-chai chi 詠齋集 (SPTK), 74.7b–8b (inscription for the Yuan-ming building 遠明樓記).
back, far enough from the interminable horsecart traffic and the marketplace clamor that none of the noise could be heard there. Others did less well. Liu Sung’s father (Liu O, 1295–1352) moved from his kinsmen’s rural base to a house near the east wall, which “one entered through a mean alley, reaching a mean dwelling where the family lived frugally,” and where he eked out a poor living as a professional tutor.

Medical practitioners were also drawn to the city, as was a more transient assortment of indigents, child-monks, litigants, government students, yamen underlings, and the like. How large was the city population? In the late sixteenth century, Lo Ta-hung remarked that there were “several myriad” city families, including “a thousand” government clerks and lictors in T’ai-ho, but all that is surely exaggerated guesswork. No official enumeration of Ming or Ch’ing date seems to survive.

Urban T’ai-ho seems sorely to have lacked for public spaces. Only a tiny park or two was maintained by county officials, and that for their own use. At the government Confucian school, an Assistant Instructor in the 1460s saw to the making of some improvements upon the small garden and pool, building a kiosk there for students and staff, and a picture-window (hsuan) in his own quarters that overlooked the scene. In the 1490s, an Assistant Magistrate planted lotus in a fishpond by his office, and put up a pavilion; there he held an occasional drinking party, featuring lotus-root and lotus-seed snacks, and wine-cups fashioned from lotus leaves. The best public amenity was actually a tall structure, a landmark called the K’uai-ko (‘Happy Tower’) that reared up behind the city’s east wall, lifting the visitor out of the city altogether, and affording him a view over the wall and into the pleasant rural landscapes beyond.

11 Wang Chih 王直 (1379–1462), T-an chi 抑菑集 (SKCSCP, 8th ser.), A6.13a-14a (preface to poems for the Ching-hsiu studio 靜修齋詩序); Chih Yu-tzu 金幼孜 (1368–1431), poem on the Ching-hsiu studio, in CAFc 52.2ab.
12 Hsiao Ch’i 蕭岐 (1325–96), Cheng-ku hsien-sheng chi 正固先生集 (ms. ed.), C.34a–36b (lament for Liu O 劉快軒先生哀辭).
13 Lo Ta-hung 蕭大鉉 (c.s. 1586), Tzu-yuan wen-chi 紫原文集 (late Ming woodblock ed.), 3.28a–29b (preface to poems for magistrate Chang 張泰和祿庭草叢).
14 Sang Yueh 桑悦 (c.j. 1465), inscription for the Pan-mou pavilion 半畇亭記, in Ming wen-hai 明文海 (SKCSCP, 7th ser.), 331.14a–15a.
15 CAFc 5.20a–21a, poem for the Ai-lien pavilion 愛蓮亭.
Since the turn of the twelfth century, it was the custom of the literati to climb the K’uai-ko on invitation, or on special occasions, and, inspired by the extramural scenery, to compose lyrical or descriptive poems.\(^\text{16}\)

The city may have attracted the poor and ambitious. It also clearly repelled many of the affluent, whose fortunes had been made, and so there took place through the Ming a steady departure of wealthy people from the inner city (or the crowded parts of the western suburb) for the rest and quiet of rural or semi-rural places. Lung P’an-chü built somewhere in City West a mansion “bigger than the county yamen,” but his great-grandson, Lung Yen-o (1359–1424), hating the city, moved back to the ancestral estate in rural Kan-ch’i (“Sweet Creek,” township number 54).\(^\text{17}\) Tseng Shih-min, “tired of the disorder, dirt, and noise” of the inner city, moved out to rural Yueh-kang (“Moon Hill,” township number 32) around 1400.\(^\text{18}\) Mme. Kuo (1353–1432), a hater of city life, spent her declining years with her sons on their detached rural estates somewhere to the west.\(^\text{19}\) Hu Chih wrote that he lived for four years somewhere in the western suburb, but, disliking the “marketplace clamor” there, in 1546 he moved to an “out-of-the-way lane” where he had a garden, “where I wield the hoe, leaving the books behind. . . . Here the reddening oranges, frost-touched, are ready to drop, and the fragrant red hollyhocks embrace the sun.”\(^\text{20}\)

Early in the fifteenth century, Yang Ssu-ch’ing, a retired official, also escaped city congestion for more open space. One guesses that he moved from inside the city to a space on the north edge of the western suburb, but the wards (fang) in question are now unidentified, and one cannot be sure. Other details of this move are rich:

\[\text{[Yang] had lived a long time in Nan-hsun ward. But every day he could hear the din from the shops and markets, and his family had outgrown the limited space, so he looked for a better place to live. It happened that the Chang owned several hundred mou of garden in Ming-shih ward, which was secluded and quiet, but inconve-}\]

\(^\text{16}\) Huang T’ing-chien 黃庭堅 (1045–1105) is said to have begun this custom when he was magistrate in T’ai-ho. K’uai-ko poems through the ages are legion.

\(^\text{17}\) Wang Chih, B29.41a–42b (epitaph).

\(^\text{18}\) Ibid., B5.37b–39a (inscription on farming joys in Yueh-kang 月岡耕樂記).

\(^\text{19}\) Ibid., A8.13b–15b (epitaph for one of her sons).

\(^\text{20}\) Hu Chih 胡直 (1517–85), Heng-lu ching-she ts’ang-kao 衡廬精舍藏稿 (SKCSCP, 4th ser.), A5.3b–4b (poems on moving house 徒宅四首).
nient for them, and they wished to sell. Yang paid more than a fair price. He then
had the building sites planned out, after which he assembled the materials and
labor. He put up an ancestral temple, a hall for entertaining guests, living quar-
ters, housing for his sons and grandsons, a studio for study, a pavilion set among
flower plantings, plus storehouses, kitchen, and stables. Everything he needed
was there. The whole complex was surrounded by a wall with a double gate in
front. The materials were bought from merchants, while artisans and laborers were
recruited in their spare time. He paid for everything—tile, clay, nails, and black,
white, and red paints—no matter the cost. Every worker was paid as well. He im-
portuned no one.21

One notes here that a large garden space (its surplus presumably
intended for city consumption) has had its price bid up, and has
given way to home building. Thus as urban settlement expands out-
ward, zones of intensive farming must retreat.

Curiously, suburban spread beyond the city walls of T’ai-ho was
not uniform. South of the city, the Kan river shore seems to have
lain undeveloped. East of the city too, suburbs failed to grow. The
gazetteer of 1879 lists no extramural alleys or lanes here at all
(although at least one—Liang family lane—is known for the Ming
period from other sources).22 Flooding may have discouraged
development. Very close to the east wall lay Ch’ing-ch’i (‘‘Clear
Creek’’), where, just before it did flood in June, 1677, one could see
‘‘long, level banks covered with green vegetation, and on the islets
yellow calves and black steers, some grazing, some drinking, some
lying down, and others running in alarm; and on the opposite side
[of the creek] the roofs of houses hidden in clumps of trees.’’23
Somewhere on the east side of the city, Tseng Yung-ling built a
detached estate in the fifteenth century, with a bamboo grove and ir-
rigation ditch. From his new home, one then looked out upon
farmers in the plain, fishermen on Clear Creek, and travellers on
the long, smoky, shop-lined thoroughfare.24

To the north, suburbanization ended close in and at a sharply
defined boundary. There was a ‘‘North Gate Market’’ apparently
just inside the wall. Just outside and parallel to the wall was Ch’iu-

21 Wang Chih, A1.39b–41b (inscription for the Chi-ch’ing hall 積慶堂記).
22 Ibid., B18.22a–23b (preface to the Liang genealogy 梁氏族譜序).
23 Wei Hsi 魏PageIndex (1624–81), account of a trip 遊記, in CAPC 3.11b–12a.
24 Ch’en Haun 陳循 (1385–1462), Fang-chou wen-chi 芳洲文集 (1593 woodblock ed.),
B3.9a–10a (inscription for eight scenes from the eastern suburb 東郊八景記).
tzu hsiang ("Lane of Successful Officials"), where stood elite residences that were operational bases for intensive farming. Hsiao So-keng (Hsiao Mu, 1368–1432) lived there in the Keng-tu t'ang ("Hall of Farming and Study"), where he and his official career-seeking sons directed their slaves in working the fields of "top fertility" they owned.25 Another eminent family, the Tseng, were neighbors on the lane; "though [Tseng Yung-li's] fields, gardens, and ponds are not inordinately extensive, the property is more than that of a middle income family, and he has enough to meet his needs."26

The peculiar fact is that suburban growth beyond the city walls was negligible everywhere, except directly to the west. Here the narrow lanes of this suburb did not assemble themselves into a compact arc hugging the west wall as one might expect, but instead formed themselves into the general shape of a long, narrow finger extending out about half a mile through the flat country on the city's west side. Two parallel roads that led out from the two west gates of the city served as the suburb's main axes, and a network of residential inner lanes linked the two thoroughfares together.

That suburbanization affected the city's west side, and not any other, may be related to the demonstrably greater density and extent of the rural hinterlands beyond. The linear morphology of that suburb must have something to do with what is evident on a detailed soil map published in 1941: the western suburb straddled a soil frontier, with fine alluvial sand to the south, and a more mixed and productive alluvium to the north.27 Indeed, in the Ming, the land south of the suburb, facing the Kan river, lay pretty much vacant, while intensive farming estates lined the suburb's north edge. So it appears that the suburb's elongated shape must have been encouraged by a need and desire for convenient access to some of T'ai-ho's richest farming soils.

25 Wang Chih, A2.33b–35a (inscription for the Keng-tu hall 耕讀堂記); Hsiao Tz'u 蕭鎬 (d. 1464), Shang-yueh chü-shih chi 尚約居士集 (1494 woodblock ed.), 14.12b–14a (epitaph).
26 Wang Chih, A6.44b–46a (departing message for Tseng Yung-li 送曾用礦序). Tseng Yung-li is Tseng Chin (1380–1458); Wang Chih, B33.9a–10b (epitaph).
North and northwest of the city, then, along the Lane of Successful Officials (Ch’iu-tzu hsiang) and Grass Garden Lane (Mao-yuan hsiang), just where city and suburb verged on countryside, was to be found some of T’ai-ho’s most desirable real estate, combining the advantages of proximity to the city with the wholesome delights of rural life. Several examples descriptive of these conditions are available. Lo Ts’un (1347–1421), one of seven brothers, lived on a suburban “market thoroughfare” (perhaps Grass Garden Lane) where he boarded medical students and practiced herbal ophthalmology. His main hall had a high mound to the rear, a clear pond in front, a fragrant grove on one side, and level land on the other, altogether “the best scenery in the suburban precincts.”

Tseng Ts’un-li, also a practitioner of herbal medicine, built for himself a fine sepulchre amid the “fertile fields and watercourses” out on Kao-ying Lane, on the west edge of the suburb.

Yuan Ho (1394–1439) moved his father, Yuan Chung-hsien (1373–1436) from the family’s main residence on commercial Hou chieh (“Back Street,” adjacent and parallel to the city’s west wall) out to a detached estate near the “old west wall,” with a new home, where “the land was broad and level, the bamboo and trees luxuriant, and fields, gardens, and ponds lay everywhere side by side.” The father disliked “vulgar flashiness and disorder,” and preferred the farming life, “daily setting the slaves (t’ung-nu) to their farm work, and occasionally going out in person to supervise them, staff in hand.”

Perhaps because population was on the increase, one can detect early in the Ming definite pressures aimed at eliminating careless or inappropriate farming techniques near the city. Wang Chih (1379–1462) owned “ten mou” (perhaps an acre and a half) of garden and “several mou” of ricefields adjacent to the Yuan holdings just mentioned. Early in the fifteenth century, a neighbor of the Hsiao sur-

28 Chou Shih-hsiu 周是修 (1354–1402), Ch’u’-jao chi 節薦集 (SKCSCP, 4th ser.), 5.57b–59a (preface to the Chi-cho t’ang shih-uen-chi 極拙堂詩文集序); see also Hsiao Ch’i, C.10b–12a, and Wang Chih, B30.17a–18b.

29 Wang Chih, B3.24a–26a (inscription for Tseng’s sepulcher 曾先生壽藏記).

30 Ibid., A2.23b–25b (inscription for the Tun-pen hall 悅本堂記); Yang Shih-ch’i 楊士奇 (1365–1444), Tung-li ch’i’ian-chi 東里全集 (SKCSCP, 7th ser.), B30.7b–9a (epitaph); Wang Chih, B30.38b–40a (epitaph). Here and elsewhere, the translation “slave” is provisional; the exact conditions of bondage in T’’ai-ho are obscure and await further research.
name advised Wang not to abuse or neglect the rice, as he had seen others do, but plow the paddy in winter and leave it idle until spring, then carefully select the seed, transplant the sprouts without hurting the roots, fertilize carefully, weed thoroughly, and maintain the correct water depth, so as to ensure the best possible return at harvest time.\(^{31}\) Many years later, as a retired imperial official, an aged Wang Chih toured his ricefields by sedan-chair. His sons marshaled ‘‘several hundred tenants and slaves (tien-p’u)’’ to transplant the shoots, and all these laborers sang to the beat of a gong as they worked. It was a gala occasion that lasted the entire day.\(^{32}\)

The main Wang residence was on Hollow Street (Ao chieh) in the southwest part of the suburb, but several other Wang kinsmen came to own individual detached estates, each with gardens and large fields, elsewhere along the suburban edge.\(^{33}\) Early in the fifteenth century, Wang Chih’s older brother, Wang Hsin, bought some hundred mou of land there, where he built a detached house (the Chia hsuan, ‘‘Harvest Studio’’), and an irrigation pond, and directed his slaves (t’ung-nu) in the raising of chickens, pigs, fish, turtles, and water caltrop. He lived close enough to the central city to visit friends there several times a year, but at home his habits were deliberately rustic: ‘‘He wears peasant clothes (yeh-fu) when he greets his guests; at other times he sings ancient farming songs, with only the white mew gulls and the bamboo below the pond for company.’’\(^{34}\) Ch’en Hsun thought Wang Hsin’s rice-farming methods substandard, however. Some ten mou, planted to rice, looked weed-infested, and Ch’en advised him to remedy the problem.\(^{35}\)

Just how far to the west did T’ai-ho’s suburban arm extend? On some current detailed maps, urban and suburban space have become indistinguishable, and T’ai-ho city assumes an elongated shape, with its western part angling downwards at its extremity until it actually touches the Kan river, about a mile and a half from the

\(^{31}\) Wang Chih, B36.25a–27a (a comment on property 書方寸地後).
\(^{32}\) Yin Chih 尹直 (1427–1511), Chien-chai so-chui lu 善齋瑣記 (preface dated 1507; reprinted Taipei, 1969), p. 156.
\(^{33}\) Hsiao Tz’u, 1.13a–14a (inscription for the I-hsiao studio 橡秀軒記).
\(^{34}\) Yang Shih-ch’i, A2.4b–6b (inscription for the Harvest studio 輝軒記).
\(^{35}\) Ch’en Hsun, poems section, 2.10ab (Harvest studio, for Wang Hsing-min [Wang Hsin] 稼軒，為王行敬).
old city center. In the Ming period, the suburb ended, at least for administrative purposes, about a half mile out, where the urban township (number 45) met rural townships 56 and 57. But it could be that the suburb was actually as long in the Ming as the whole city region appears to be in modern times. It may have continued on into what was administratively handled as rural space.

The basis for this presumption is that a locality known as P‘o-t‘ang-k‘ou (“Broken Reservoir Mouth,” township number 56), still shown on a Japanese military map of 1940, sits just where more recent maps have the city angling into the river. In the early Ming, P‘o-t‘ang-k‘ou was a rural ward, and while its official designation did not change, a city-like environment clearly emerged there in the sixteenth century. Earlier, two prominent and very powerful men—P‘eng Yü-chih (1339–1408) and his nephew, P‘eng Pai-lien (1386–1433)—each owned half of a lake (Shih hu, “Stone Lake”) at P‘o-t‘ang-k‘ou. In it they planted lotus and water caltrop, and, in the fruiting season, they conducted boating parties for their guests, who picked the crop for amusement and eating pleasure. At the end of the outing, the P‘engs allowed the “poor and ragged people” to glean the remainder. Eventually, it is said, home-builders came, and by the mid-sixteenth century, there had grown up by the lake a bustling market, with “shops as thick as the teeth of a comb,” and lanes “reaching in every direction.” All this was in danger of being washed away by the Kan river, until a government-sponsored dyking project saved it.

Thus in T‘ai-ho one may draw at least an approximate picture of urban settlement and its perceived conditions. Small as T‘ai-ho city may have been, many considered it very crowded and very noisy. Its demands upon the surrounding countryside for foodstuffs, fuel, and other resources were by all the signs substantial. High-density living conditions extended beyond the city walls on one side in the form of a long, narrow suburb for perhaps as far as a mile and a half. Immediately surrounding both the city and its suburb was a ring of high-income farming, where it appears in some cases that

37 Ch‘en Ch‘ang-chi 陳昌碩 (c.s. 1538), P‘o-t‘ang-k‘ou inscription 破塘口記, in CHTC 63.7a–8a.
gardens took up much more space than ricefields, maybe because the garden crops were grown for city markets, while the rice was for home consumption.

To this pattern there were two striking exceptions. One was Lung-chou ("Dragon Island"), which recent maps indicate is no longer an island, but has become part of the Kan river’s north shore. In the Ming, Dragon Island lay very close to the city, yet its settlement was neither urban nor suburban but followed some peculiar pattern of its own. One could find on Dragon Island a Buddhist temple; a Confucian academy; kitchen gardens of detached estates in places cleared of forest and viny undergrowth; houses screened by bamboo; towers and pavilions by the water’s edge; and yet enough forest cover to suggest, from a distance, the texture of woven fabric. Here and there one found some commercial gardening, some dry field crops, and some small-scale commercial lumbering, as where the slaves of a friend of Hu Chih’s were allowed to cut down Dalbergia trees and sell them. A visitor could easily lose his way on the island. 38

The other exception was Liu-ch’i ("Willow Creek"), a neighborhood generally placeable in the northeast sector of the western suburb, very near the city wall. The Willow Creek that must have given the neighborhood its name appears on no list of local streams, nor on any map, traditional or modern. Yet water was abundantly available here, and it may be that the original creek was changed beyond recognition by pond and canal digging. A scattering of descriptions spread over three centuries gives definite evidence of land-use change there.

The earliest known Willow Creek homesite was that of a branch of the Ch’en patriline, who lived there up until the civil wars of the 1350s and 60s. The home sat in a bamboo clump. The entrance to it was by way of a small lane that led west off Ku-ching hsiang ("Old Well Lane," a north-south lane listed in the 1879 gazetteer). The Ch’en lost this property in the war, and were too weak and poor after it to reoccupy the site. New occupants dug a canal where the small lane had been, and made a pond out of what had been the Ch’en homesite. 39

38 Hu Chih, A4.14b–15a; A5.2b (poems).
39 Wang Chih, A5.13b–16a (preface to the Chu-shan Ch’en genealogy 竹山陳氏族譜序).
It is a fair guess that the new occupant was Liang Lan (1343-1410), who, right after the wars, moved from the city to Hao-t’ou hsiang (‘Moat Head Lane’), and built a detached house and farming estate in Willow Creek, with vegetable plots, and ‘several myriad stalks of fine bamboo planted all around.’ He dug a ditch to lead in a flow of water that circulated all along the paths inside. ‘The soil was moist and fertile, and hemp and mulberry flourished.’

The gardens in Willow Creek took up some five mou. ‘I grow hemp in the higher part,’ related Liang Lan in a poem, ‘with various fruits and vegetables round about. In spring, everything starts growing at once, so [today] as soon as the sky cleared, we went out with our hoes. The work wearied the muscles, but we got up all the weeds. My family knew we’d be thirsty, so they sent out a potful of rice-beer. I sat right down and poured it out as the sun set over the mountains in the west, and when finally I came home to the north window, there were no worries on my mind.’

Liang Lan’s closest neighbor on the east owned a tiny garden that sat right astride an east-west thoroughfare (perhaps the one in the middle of the suburb). The neighbor styled himself ‘The Old Man of the West Garden.’ Liang Lan’s son later recalled him:

He lived in city west. Our home is just west, alongside Willow Creek, where my father used to enjoy our several mou of garden plots [surrounded by] pine and bamboo, that uncannily suggest a dark ravine whenever the sunset clouds loom beyond. The Old Man of the West Garden’s sense of enjoyment was just like my father’s. His garden was barely a mou in size, and it straddled the main thoroughfare. In it he used to plant vegetables and medicinal herbs. The fragrance was so heavy that passers-by always used to stop to take a look into it.

Liang Lan’s son, Liang Ch’ien (1366-1418) expanded his father’s gardens and diversified its produce. Out a second-story

40 Liang Ch’ien 梁潛 (1366-1418). Po-an chi 沛奄集 (SKCSCP, 6th ser.), 8.13b (account of conduct for his father 先君梁潛先生行實).
41 Liang Lan 梁蘭 (1343-1410). Ch’i-le shih-chi 習世詩集 (SKCSCP, 8th ser.), 8b (poem, enjoying myself in the western garden plots 西園自適). Liang Lan owned large grain fields elsewhere, which slaves worked, and which he visited by horsecart: 32b-33a (poem, home from farming 養耕).
42 Liang Ch’ien, 16.11b-12a (colophon to a biography of the Old Man of the West Garden 西園翁傳).
studio window, itself shaded dark by pine and bamboo, one could now view water caltrop planted in a willow-ringed pond.43 Nearby, a stone path transected an herb garden. From the doorway of the house one could hear the fish splash, and the orioles twitter.44 “My home,” wrote Liang Ch’ien, “is on T’ai-ho’s Willow Creek, where there are several tens of mou of garden plots. There are several thousand stalks of bamboo, several hundred peach and plum trees, and several tens of beds growing rape-turnip, cabbage, ginger, sugar cane, cress (Nasturtium montanum), black mustard (Brassica juncea), barberry (Lycium chinense), and chrysanthemum. . . . And not even the costliest delicacies can surpass the lettuce gathered in the spring snow, or the leek harvested after the frost.”45

For the next two centuries, practically nothing can be learned of Willow Creek. When one encounters it again in the 1620s, some large portion of the neighborhood has just undergone a complete facelift. On Yü-ch’ih hsiang (“Fishpond Lane”), the Pan-jo Buddhist temple, a pre-Ming structure long in ruin, was rebuilt in 1624 by Hsiao Shih-wei (1585–1651), a Buddhist enthusiast, who also created right by it in Willow Creek a large (“hundred mou”) and nationally famous pleasure park known as the Ch’un-fou yuan (“Spring Floating Garden”). This park was wrecked in the wars of the 1640s, but it featured an artificial lake that survived, and around that lake his nephew built a new Buddhist resort that was also nationally famous until it too ended, not in war, but through the political persecution of its habitués in the 1670s. After that, Willow Creek is heard of no more.46

Thus, thanks to its water, Willow Creek turns out to have been an exceptional kind of suburban place, a small whorl of turbulence in the lee of larger and perhaps more stable patterns. One expects a uniformity of dense housing in the suburban interior and an intensive farming fringe, and one expects housing to replace gardens as the demand for land escalates. But here one finds housing yielding to small and primitive gardens, which soon (expectedly) give way to

44 Ibid., poem on garden life (reprint ed.), p. 720.
45 Ibid., 7.18b–19a (preface to the Le-p’u poems 萊園詩序).
46 CAFC 9.12a. These developments are important, and are discussed later.
larger and more intensive gardening; but finally all is unpredictably upstaged, if not entirely squeezed out, by resort development.

Away from the city and its suburb, the T’ai-ho countryside clearly featured not a uniformity, but a puzzling variety of settlement types. Judging from the literary evidence, it looks as though rural settlements varied by size, and also by the presence or absence in them of elite (landlord, literati) families. Some common-descent groups appear to have maintained in the countryside a tradition of living in crowded, quasi-urban conditions. Others, however, insisted upon a dispersion of families in local rural space, or outright emigration, or both, explicitly in order to avoid such crowding. Furthermore, where one settlement was elite, and near neighbors were not, a relationship of tenurial dependency of the latter upon the former can sometimes be shown. This is not easy territory to penetrate, but the exercise should permit some conclusions to be drawn about the ways in which the population spread itself about in T’ai-ho’s rural landscape, forming (as will be noted later) epicenters for land-use systems.

Tightly clustered and city-like rural settlements occasionally made strong visual impressions upon literati observers. Wang Chih (1379–1462) once viewed the Hsiao settlement in Jen-ch’eng ward (township number 25) from a distance; he could hear chickens crowing and dogs barking, and saw ‘‘houses [packed as closely as] fishscales amid fine and broad fields.’’ The main buildings included the Jui-t’ang (‘‘Lucky Portent Hall’’), Chi-shan t’ang (‘‘Hall of Accumulated Goodness’’), Lin-ch’ing t’ang (‘‘Pavilion Overlooking Clear [Water]’’), and the Kao-ming lou (‘‘High and Bright Building’’). The structures attest to the wealth of this kinship group, and the choice of names to its Confucian pretensions.47

There are other examples of this sort. At the home of the Liu kinsmen of Chuan-chiang (‘‘Turning River’’) ward in township number 52, ‘‘the four classes of people (literati, farmers, artisans, merchants) live in close proximity, their gates and walls standing side by side.’’48 The Cheng family residences at Shuang-ch’i (‘‘Dou-

47 Wang Chih, B3.49a–50b (inscription for the Chi-shan hall 資善堂記); Yin Ch’ang-lung 尹昌隆 (c.s. 1397), Yin Na-an hsien-sheng i-kao 尹訥菴先生遺稿 (ms. ed.), ch. 4, no p., (preface to the Hsiao genealogy 蕭氏族譜序).
48 Chou Shih-hsiu, 5.43a–44b (departing message for Assistant Instructor Liu Chung-heng, en route to Shih-ch’eng 送劉司訓仲珩之官石城序).
ble Creek’’) in Ta-jui ward (township number 35) were set just below some large hills, in a landscape of broad fields, creeks, gardens, and trees; Ch’en Hsun (1385–1462) wrote that “their tile roofs look like fishscales, rising up in a dense mass, just like city residences, wherever you look.” The Cheng kinsfolk here numbered “a thousand and several hundred,” and “several tens” of their buildings were formal pavilions, halls, and multistory structures (t’ing, t’ang, lou). One of these, the Ying-hsi lou (“Greet-the-Sunrise Building”), built by Cheng Tsung-hsiao early in the sixteenth century, housed his living quarters (fang) on the bottom floor and a loft on the top. He would climb to the loft each dawn and there plan in quiet the day’s activities.

Ch’i-t’ien (“Lacquer Field”) ward in township number 51 was located where Lacquer Creek joined other streams and fed into a broad and fertile plain, where it became navigable to fishing and commercial boats. Settlement was considered dense here; “the huts of the peasants and wood-gatherers look like fishscales or anthills.” One could view these, and hear the songs and laughter of woodsmen, peasants, and travellers from atop either of the two towers of the resident Chou kinsmen.

Kinsmen of the Hu surname of Nan-ching (“South Path”) ward in township number 55 lived in houses “as closely packed as fishscales” and raised chickens, swine, fish, turtles, fruits, vegetables, and edible bamboo. These Hu numbered some one hundred males in the fifteenth century, creating conditions crowded enough to compel Hu Ju-ch’i to move to another location in the same ward, where he built a house, acquired fields and gardens, and erected a boarding school for deserving junior relatives. But while Hu Ju-ch’i moved away to escape crowding, a kinsman, Hu Ju-lung, built skywards. His K’ang-yun lou (“Building that challenges the Clouds”) “rears above the cluster of other houses, out of the

49 Ch’en Hsun, A5.17a–18a (preface to the Shuang-ch’i Cheng genealogy 龍溪鄭氏族譜序).
50 Ibid.; Lo Ch’in-shun 羅欽順 (1465–1547), Cheng-an ts’un-kao 整扈存稿 (SKGSCP, 4th ser.), 2.1a–2b (inscription for the Ying-hsi building 迎曦樓記).
51 Ibid.; Lo Ch’in-shun, 2.16b–18a (inscription for the Shih-te hall 世德堂記).
52 Hu Kuang 胡廣 (1370–1418), inscription for the Kao-ming building 高明樓記, in THHC 24.44a–45a; Wang Chih, B6.29a–30b (postscript to Chou Chih-kang’s Kao-ming lou poems 周志剛高明樓詩後序); B6.30b–32a (preface to the Yuan-ming lou poems 遠明樓詩序).
dirt and dust and up into the wind and rain; from it you can see at a glance all the surrounding mountains."

Wang Wei of Nan-fu ward (township number 61), having returned home for mourning, found his kinsmen too many and his living space cramped, and so, sometime early in the fifteenth century, he built a new house about a third of a mile west of the old residence. It had fields in front, a pond in back, and mountains on either side. There Wang lived for a while with his sons, growing crops and raising fish, at night reading books and looking at paintings by oil lamp.

Now, one may search further about rural T’ai-ho and find different styles of elite settlement, where there was no apparent city-like clustering, and yet things still reached a point where the inhabitants became conscious of overcrowding. For example, at Ch’ing-i (‘‘Clear Bank,’’ not a ward, possibly in township number 60), the Hsiao family holdings included an apartment called the Nan-hsiu hsuan (‘‘Studio of Southern Perfection’’), out of whose window, along one line of sight, could be seen a tall pine, an old apricot tree, widely spaced bamboo, then elms, mulberry, and ramie; and along another line of sight, a stream snaking down from a distant hill which irrigated ‘‘rice plots and vegetable gardens’’ before debouching into a nearby pond. Despite good management and substantial holdings of good cropland, a scion of this kin group of professional artists thought that the population was growing too large for the land, and so built a new home less than a mile from the old, in his opinion far enough to prevent fighting among the descendants, but near enough to sustain kinship relations.

The entrance to the home grounds of the unrelated Hsiao people of Nan-ch’i (‘‘South Creek,’’ in township number 59) was described by Ou-yang To (1487–1544): ‘‘Once I went north to the foothills of Mt. Wu, on the way crossing Nan-ch’i ward, where I saw an enormous gate with massive decorative beams rising over the high trees like steam from a cauldron. The local people told me

53 Wang Chih, B3.34b–36a (inscription for the K’ang-yun building 抗雲樓記); B5.59b–62a (inscription for the school fields of the Hu family 胡氏塾田記).
54 Ibid., B5.8b–10a (inscription for the Western Estate 西墅記).
55 Chou Shih-hsiu, 6.8b–10b (inscription for the Nan-hsiu studio 南秀軒記); Wang Chih, B17.45b–46b (preface to poems for the I-an hall 貌安堂詩序).
the Hsiao had been living there for more than four centuries, but that whenever conditions grew overcrowded, branches moved away, and many of these too have formed large aggregations.\textsuperscript{56} The Hsiao residences at Nan-ch’i were clearly dispersed, not tightly clumped. Behind their ceremonial gate lay “several tens” of individual homesites and interconnected residential complexes, “spreading about over the hills and valleys like chesspieces, and rearing up into the clouds,” all enjoying an abundant rural economy of grains, vegetables, fuel, oxen, horses, dogs, swine, rice-beer, fishponds, and forest plantation. Seasonal ritual gatherings attracted “several myriad” kin from far and near, creating what must have resembled a temporary city.\textsuperscript{57}

That the rural landscape was in some degree organized along manorial lines is evident in several examples from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. From a focal point of settlement, one or another lord extended a wide span of control over several different types of landscape; and the mix of products from those landscapes was on occasion said to have been enough in quantity and variety that the lord and his household not only achieved self-sufficiency, but enjoyed some measure of affluence as well.

The Kuo household of Kao-p’ing (“High Flat” ward, in township number 61) is a case in point. Basic to their well-being was water access. Out of the Tiao-ch’i (“Dock Creek”) hills and their scenic heights came a twisting, fast-flowing stream, splashing along a low diversion dike for about two-thirds of a mile, until it poured into rock-edged T’ai-hsin (“Great New”) reservoir, which also collected other streams, and was several hundred mou in size. Edible bamboo was planted nearby. “Their ponds and reservoirs are variously large and small, deep and shallow” wrote Liu Sung (1321–81). “All of them are either rock-edged or bamboo-wattled to prevent leakage, so that the water level remains high even in drought years. They are also good for bream, tench, and other fish, and [indecipherable] water birds, that hatch in spring and are

\textsuperscript{56} Ou-yang To 歐陽鐸 (1487–1544), \textit{Ou-yang Kung-chien kung i-chi} 歐陽恭簡功遺集 (Ming woodblock ed.), 8.5b–7b (preface to an updated genealogy of the Nan-ch’i Hsiao 南溪蕭氏續譜序).

\textsuperscript{57} Hu Chih, A10.3b–5b (preface to an updated genealogy of the Nan-ch’i Hsiao 南溪蕭氏續修族譜序).
plump by fall, when they are taken to the kitchen and prepared as food for guests.’’ Next in the discussion come the Kuo fields. ‘‘Their fields wind about between two mountains, and so are narrow here and wide there. Some are high, and some low-lying. They are good for early and late rice, fragrant rice, glutinous millet, and wheat. From these they ferment beers and make cakes for the fall and winter sacrifices.’’ From fields, the description jumps abruptly to the wild. ‘‘There are fine rabbit, fox, musk-deer, deer, and wild [indecipherable] for hunting.’’ Then settlement: ‘‘Where they live, there are many field-men and wood-gatherers, but there are no merchants with their slick practices, nor do the customs feature fighting and aggression.’’ These descriptive fragments, jumbled as they may be, do portray an achieved ideal of self-sufficiency.

In Shih-kang (‘‘Stone Hill’’ ward, in township number 10) lived Liu Sung’s mother’s people, the Shih-kang Hsiao, whose lands produced peaches, pears, mandarin oranges, and persimmons, together with cabbage, leek, melon, edible bamboo, and taro, plus rice and pond-bred fish, and livestock (zebu cattle and goats). Liu Sung described in detail the formalities and orderly routines observed by these people, and remarked that ‘‘inwardly I used to envy all this, since my own home was poor by comparison.’’ He went on to say that ‘‘once I heard the elders talk about Hsiao Pao-sun, who was an accounts-keeper and the son of Hsiao Ssu-lien, a facilitated degree holder of the late Sung [thirteenth century]. He was one of the richest men in the county. For several tens of li around his home, all of the gardens, fields, mountains, and forests were his, none of it sold to an outside surname.’’ He ended by noting that this gigantic estate was later twice damaged in civil wars, and rebuilt, though on a reduced scale.59

P’eng Ts’un-wen’s holdings lay in Ta-kuan ward in township number 25, about twenty miles southeast of the county seat. By the early fifteenth century, the P’eng had been living here some ten generations. Yields here were said to have been exceptionally high. ‘‘Beside the creeks lie fine fields and fertile soil, suitable for glutinous and non-glutinous rice. Springs pour out [from the hills]

58 Liu Sung 劉崧 (1321–81), Ch’u-weng wen-chi 搏翁文集 (Ming woodblock ed.), 14.12a–13b (postscript to an inscription for the Kuo family retreat 書郭氏隱居記後).
59 Ibid., 10.22b–25b (preface to the Hsiao genealogy 蕭氏族譜序).
on all sides, and those fields that lie at the same elevation [as the creeks] never lack for irrigation water. Where the fields are high relative to the creeks, temporary earthen dams are built to make the creeks flow laterally, so that the rest of the fields get enough water, after which [the dams] are cut. Consequently there is no worry about drought, and all the fields produce regularly.'"

Wang Chih wrote the above when P'eng Ts’un-wen came to Peking on some business, perhaps a tax transport mission. Wang, a native son and ranking imperial official, went on and put in good literary form P’eng’s own sense of satisfaction with life on his large estate, a life that (Wang asserted) the imperial state under the Yung-lo emperor’s benign hand had made possible:

At the beginning of spring, the seasonal rain begins intermittently. The fat rises in the soil and the veins of the freshets stir. At this time we pray to the soil god for a good harvest, and so receive the god’s bounty. It is a pleasurable thing now to sit down together over rice-beer and treats. Then we proceed with plowing, planting, and transplanting [the rice], manuring, irrigating, and weeding it at the right times. At this time of year, with mild rain and sun, I go and inspect the young plants, and find them growing so well and changing so fast that it is almost as though someone were guiding them. This just adds to the pleasure. At the height of summer, when the fire-star courses west, the plants fill out and fruit, good and firm, and [the fields] are yellow as far as the eye can see. So we cut and bring it in. The kernels fill the granary, like so many pearls or bits of jade. Then we brew beer and fix food for sacrifice to the ancestors and the gods. Everyone is content—father, mother, wife, children, and slaves. What pleasure can match this? In addition, my grass, trees, flowers, fruits, melons, vegetables, pigs, chickens, ducks, geese, oxen, fish, and turtles all come to maturity in season through the year. There is such rich variety and abundance that my desires are satisfied, and I need depend on nothing from outside. My pleasure is such that I would not change places with an enfeoffed feudal lord.60

Water access, high-grade fields, and diversified production also created a base for self-sufficiency for some of the Liang people. Liang Lin (fifteenth century) managed a holding in Ch’ang-ch’i (“Long Creek” ward in township number 60), several miles west of the county seat. Streams from the hills fed White Rock reservoir, and Long Creek was its effluent, which, before it emptied into the Kan river, irrigated “several thousand mou of fields.” Liang Lin’s fields lay along the upper part of Long Creek, where he supervised

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60 Wang Chih, A1.31b–33b (inscription for the joys of farming 耕樂記).
slaves (t'ung-nu) in the planting and harvesting of soybeans, wheat, millet, and rice. In the creek grew cattail, wild rice, and other esculent waterweeds. He also raised horses, asses, oxen, goats, fish, turtles, geese, and ducks.\footnote{Ibid., B5.20a–21b (inscription for the detached estate at Ch’ang-ch’i 長溪別墅記).}

The semi-technical term here used for Liang Lin’s holding is pieh-yeh, literally ‘‘separate property’’ or ‘‘detached estate.’’ In some current economic writing the term is rather mechanically taken to mean an absentee estate, but it is clear in the T’ai-ho examples that it means the family’s main base or original residential seat lay somewhere else, no more (Liang Lin was a grand-nephew of Liang Lan, so the family’s main base will have been Moat Head Lane). Similarly, some members of the Yen family of T’ai-ho city had a pieh-yeh a few miles to the northwest in Lung-men (‘‘Dragon Gate’’ ward, in township number 57). Here were ‘‘fine fields, rich soil, and gardens with waterways meandering all about. All this yields enough in grain, hemp, mulberry, fish, fruits, and vegetables to make for self-sufficiency in food and clothing.’’\footnote{Ch’en Hsun, A3.37b–39a (preface to poems on the detached estate at Lung-men 龍門別墅詩序).}

To the extent that the T’ai-ho countryside was locked up in self-sufficient estates that encompassed space planted to field crops like rice (in addition to garden and semi-wild space), arrangements of some kind had to be made for the domiciling and management of field labor. Apparently one possibility was to concentrate all labor in a single center, under the close supervision of the lord. In such cases, outfield labor would be performed by domestic (in-dwelling) slaves. It seems that P’eng Ts’un-wen and Liang Lin followed this arrangement.\footnote{Perhaps also Liang Lan; cf. n. 41, above.}

In other cases, however, the labor of the domestic slaves was focused upon the lord’s household and garden, while outfield labor was given over to self-supervising tenants, who lived in their own dwellings or hamlets, at a distance from the lord. This arrangement produced a distinct hierarchy of rural settlement, of which the dimensions were simultaneously spatial and social. Of this, the lordships of Liu Sung (1321–81) and Chou Shih-hsiu (1354–1402) pro-
vide examples. Both were literati, and for a while, when not in official service, also landlords.

Before becoming a Ming official in 1370, and after his retirement a few years later, Liu Sung was a minor landlord somewhere in Chu-lin ward (township number 38), near the south shore of the Kan. He lived in a flatland "hamlet" (ts’un) with no access to semi-wild space, and thus had to have a peasant or tenant deliver firewood to his gate. He reportedly owned and managed fifty mou of fields, which, by the standards of the time, was considered a very modest holding. We know that Liu did grub about in his garden, but much of his land was out of his sight and immediate reach, and was rented to rice-farming tenants.

Two mou of these fields, which he said he could not work himself, he "registered" (i.e., rented?) to a certain "farm father" (nung-fu) in return for a "pint or peck" of grain payment. This fellow cheated him in good years. One year a bad drought struck, Liu’s granary was empty, and he could not meet his tax payment, and so reluctantly he pressed the obstreperous tenant. Yet, he told himself, he should not hate this poor man, but direct his anger at the tax-collector instead.

Early one morning, Liu visited another "field father." On this occasion, the man swept out his yard, provided rice soup, and called out his sons to bow to the guest. Though the year was bad, and the vegetables looked poorly, this family still managed a fine decorum that put one’s mind at ease. Why, wondered Liu, do the "noble" despise such people, and maintain a stern and distant attitude, such as policemen have for thieves and bandits?

In the spring of some better year, Liu slept over at a tenant’s house. He awoke early, when the fellow (lao-weng) opened the door to go out and feed the cow. Now rice came into view, a glimpse of "a field full of green sprouts, waving in white water." Early one

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64 Liu Sung, Ch’a-weng shih-chi 槃翁詩集 (SKSCP, 5th ser.), 3.34b–35b (poem on a painting of fall colors in a distant plain 護秋色平遠圖…); Yin Chih, biography of Director of Studies Liu [Sung] 司業劉公言行錄, in Hsu Hung 徐龢 (c.s. 1490), ed., Ming ming-ch’en wan-yen lu 明名臣琬琰錄 (SKSCP, 6th ser.), 12.1a–4b.
65 Liu Sung, shih-chi, 2.11b (poem, expressing what is on my mind 述懷).
66 Ibid., 2.12a (poem, visiting a field-father 造田父).
67 8.25b (poem, rising early at a peasant house 田舍早起).
morning of a sixth month, Liu ventured out from his own home and proceeded some distance over the broad fields to the foot of some hills, where he spent the day watching and helping with the rice harvest. The peasants reaped the paddy, and brought the sheaves to their yard. It was a good harvest, and rice-beer was brought out in happy celebration. Tomorrow the tenant will make a report at the soil god’s altar.

On another occasion, this or some other tenant visited Liu Sung, bearing a pot of the rice-beer he had just brewed from no, the so-called glutinous rice, which ripened in the fall, much later than the early eating rice just mentioned. Liu had little to offer in return, only steamed vegetables from his garden, but they were good. Disarmed by this courtesy, and mindful of the “twenty years of civil war” just past, when field agriculture had ceased and people were glad enough to eat chaff, Liu found he hadn’t the heart to ask about “pints and pecks,” i.e. his rent payment.

Liu asserted that these rice-farming tenants had suffered their share in the civil wars of the 1350s and ‘60s; he had seen starving mothers throw infants they could not feed into the river, and much else. It was odd for him, therefore, to hear now at rice-transplanting time the newest generation of young peasants, singing as though there had never been any war at all: “North and south of the hamlet, there is plenty of spring rain; as the cuckoo with his thousand notes ignores the work of men, so too the youngsters, ignorant of the bitterness of war, sing songs redolent of peaceful times as they push in the rice seedlings.”

Liu Sung did not describe his own home. Chou Shih-hsiu, however, did give a rough idea of a manorial home, his own. It lay in Chü-kang (“Hill of the Provincial Graduate,” in township 55). It was a new construction, set up in what had been a remote and desolate place. While Chou busied himself with other pursuits, his wife, Hu Shu-hsien (1358–1439), directed the building of the home and the purchase of nearby fields. She supervised the labor, and

68 2.60b–61a (poem, returning from observing the harvest below the mountain, in the sixth month, late in the day 六月晦日山下觀稼歸).
69 2.67ab (poem, in gratitude for the field-father’s invitation to have some rice-beer 田父邀時與酒感賦).
70 8.25b (poem, observing the transplanting of rice shoots 親栽秧).
budgeted the annual yield "to provide food, clothing, sacrificial needs, and the requirements of guests."\textsuperscript{71}

The main residence was the Hou-pen t'ang, or "Hall of Devoted Attention to the Basics." It or a separate building housed the Hsieh-ching hsuan, or "Classics-writing Studio," where Chou lived and wrote when he was at home. A few hundred paces away was the "Inkstone-washing Pool" (Hsi-shih ch’ih), a half mou in size and spring-fed. A small "Bridge of Extending Clarity" (Yen-ch’ing ch’iao) spanned a creek along the path to the residential gate. On a natural mound between two creeks at one side of the main residence, Chou’s son built an ancestral temple, whose furnishings and ceremonial expenses were funded from a special field endowment. Finally, the Yung-ts’ui t’ing ("Rippling Green Pavilion"), a roofed platform with open sides, afforded views of flatland, creeks, fields, garden, and orchard, and in the distance, the "rippling green" of forested mountain.\textsuperscript{72} This estate center, then, with its parts dispersed among creeks, springs, and hummocks, was laid out like a park, taking every advantage of a natural topography that apparently required little alteration, thus preserving an uncrowded, distinctly rural ambience.

What were probably some of the out-dwelling tenant hamlets attached to this estate were described by Chou in several poems. Chou’s poems deliver an idyllic picture of these hamlets. But like Liu Sung, Chou too placed peasant society at a social as well as a spatial distance from himself. He regarded that society as a collectivity quite separate from his own social world, almost as a separate social species. It his clear from both Chou and Liu that these purely peasant settlements were centers for land-use systems in their own right, because the inhabitants, besides working ricefields, conducted a subsistence economy of their own, and seem in addition to have grown garden produce for market.

"The field families," wrote Liu, "live in a nook by the mountains; they’ve built thatched huts there, two by two. Chickens and piglets wander about, but the hemp and the mulberry prevent their

\textsuperscript{71} Ch’en Hsun, A8.3a–4b (epitaph).

\textsuperscript{72} Chou Shih-hsiu, 6.19a–21b (inscription for eight inspiring scenes at Chú-kang 興岡八詠記).
escape. The people there talk and laugh with an even temper, they work and rest with utter reason. Surely they reflect the trueness of Heaven itself, and that’s why they claim no personal ownership of things. . . .”

“Humble doorways loom by the dark path, a crooked lane goes way down to the inlet. Here ten families, two or three surnames, have been living side by side for generations. The smoke from their fires intermingles wherever you look; so too, in their routines, the people are cooperative. One man’s son heads the house on the west, while another’s daughter is the western neighbor’s wife. A cold autumn wind blows at the soil god’s shrine; piglets and rice-beer are sacrificed to the Ancestor of the Fields, to whom the old shaman burns paper money, while boys pound on a bronze drum. Mist drapes the sugar cane garden in silence, and drizzling rain falls on the taro field, as the people come home after the rites, spread mats, and chat, half drunk. . . .”

In another hamlet of “three or four families by a bamboo grove,” the people eat rice at midday, drink their rice-beer, and then set fires in the fallow fields; and “just as they have both planting and brush near at hand, so too they marry exclusively with each other. Often they bring home mountain fruit, and fish from the creek enter their diet too. Indifferently taught, they lack decorum, but their customs are simple, so they easily endure poverty. They pray only for good harvests, and so burn paper money before the soil god. There are bed after bed of long peppers [Piper longum, for market?], and trees all yellow with loquats. Their front eaves hang right over the creek, and the paths in back lead off into the mountains. Mulberry and sugar cane grow plump in the spring rain; chickens and piglets scatter in the setting sun. Sons and grandsons, for untold generations, have lived their entire lives here.”

There is no ready explanation why the purely peasant hamlets and homes that Liu Sung and Chou Shih-hsiu described are never again described by the T’ai-ho literati. By the sixteenth century, however, the literati were beginning to lose interest in the local

73 Liu Sung, shih-chi, 2.19b (poem, on a field family 田家).
74 Chou Shih-hsiu, 1.17b (poem, on a field family in autumn 田家秋日).
75 Ibid., 3.4ab (poems on field families 田家雜興五首).
natural world and the humanized landscape; perhaps the peasant hamlet was an early victim of this changing outlook.

To sum up, then: The early Ming writers provide vivid (if incomplete) impressions of the size and character of T'ai-ho's settlements, and some idea of the span of landscape control, of city, suburb, rural estates, and peasant hamlets. Beneath the surface uniformities of city, canton, township, and ward, settlements were actually quite diverse. Some were crowded, others dispersed; some were elite, others non-elite, and yet others mixed. Some elite settlements included in-dwelling aggregations of slaves; some controlled distant hamlets of tenant families.

Although the forces that shaped all these variations cannot easily be recaptured from Ming sources, those sources do show that all settlements, whatever their size or character, engendered a range of human demands upon the land surrounding them. The gardens, fields, and wild spaces of T'ai-ho were each in their own way necessary for human survival. That subject will be explored next.

INTENSITIES AND MODES OF LAND USE

Taking actual centers of settlement, whatever their size or form, as starting points, it is possible to use the literary evidence to show that the human use of landscape in T'ai-ho in Ming times must have been organized into a system of distinct rings or zones of access and yield. Taken together, these land use zones demonstrate that several very different kinds of land all had a crucial part to play in sustaining over a considerable period of time a sizeable population at a quite respectable level of affluence, sophistication, and social organization. Yet T'ai-ho's was clearly a subsistence landscape for the most part, not a commercialized one.

Starting from any center of settlement and proceeding outward, one entered first an innermost area of intensively worked garden space (yuan, p'u) often with room in it somewhere for dogs, pigs, and chickens. Gardens were minuscule in total acreage, but they were heavily worked and very productive. Next, beyond the gardens, one came upon the fields (t'ien), larger in area than gardens, but commonly lower in per-acre productivity, and not as heavily worked. Finally, somewhere beyond both gardens and fields
there stretched an enormous outer envelope of uncultivated space that was an absolutely essential component of T’ai-ho’s subsistence landscape, though on average its per-acre yields were the lowest of all. (There was an ancient word for that space—*tse*—but the T’ai-ho writers never used it.)

A few technical words of ancient Mediterranean origin will help in the understanding of these landscapes. If what goes on in the garden (*hortus*) is horticulture, then what goes on in the field (*ager*) is "agriculture," and those words will be used with these restricted applications in mind. The exploitation of uncultivated space, essential in many pre-modern subsistence economies, has all but vanished in modern times, as has the old vocabulary that once named and described it. But the old noun "march" means just the right thing: a mosaic of hacked-up forest, groves of lopped shrubs or trees interspersed with grassy or weedy glades. The rare adjective "nemoral" derives from the analogous *nemus* or wooded pasture of ancient Italy. And so one may refer to the three principal subsistence zones as horticultural, agricultural, and nemoral.

What sort of horticulture was T’ai-ho’s? One many construct a general typology of gardening modes, using a continuum of which the two extremes may be, at the one end, a *jibaro*, or apparently planless jumble of subsistence plants of every possible size and habit, each species of plant being represented by only a few individuals; and, at the other end, a commercialized monoculture, with large areas planted to a single species. T’ai-ho’s gardens seem to have filled much of the continuum, but without reaching the extremes.

Some commercial horticulture has been mentioned already, and there are further examples. The gardens of Lo Hui-ch’ing (of Hsiamu ward, township 39) featured single species growing in such quantity as to suggest a commercial operation; late in the fourteenth century, "in the west part of his garden, green leeks stand thick-planted in a thousand beds, and behind his house, a myriad red

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fagara bushes grow widely spaced." On Lung-chou, the big river island just south of T’ai-ho city, lived a certain Elder Yao in the early fifteenth century, with his home surrounded by woods and several tens of mou of fertile land. He grew, perhaps as outfield crops, hemp, millet, and soybeans which yielded him several hundred hu yearly; but out of gratitude for the founding of the Ming and the return of peaceful conditions, he sent as a gift to the Yung-lo emperor ‘‘several tens of boxes of sugar cane, melons, and yams,’’ which fact suggests, again, commercial gardening on some scale. In 1370, Buddhist monks funded the rebuilding of their temple on the south bank of the Kan from the proceeds of what surely was commercial gardening:

The gardens attached to the temple amount to something over ten mou, and these are presently planted to several hundred fagara bushes, several hundred yams, a thousand or more leeks and cabbages, and several tens of [privet or ash] trees for [insect white-] wax. The pathways are broad and even, and the drainage channels ordered and regular. Hired laborers are assigned the task of cultivating with plows drawn by two-steer teams, and so rapidly do they go, that it is almost as though night, or a storm, were fast approaching.

Most T’ai-ho gardens, however, seem to have been mainly of the kitchen or subsistence type, located very close to the homesite, owing to the range and frequency of the labor demands they imposed. Besides planting, fertilizing, thinning, weeding, and hoeing, there was a need for daily watering, picking, and hand-squashing of bugs, tasks that family members or domestic slaves performed. While outfield crops, wet or dry, grew in unitary ‘‘fields’’ (t’ien), gardens were usually subdivided into small rectangular plots or beds (ch’i), with each bed sporting a single species. There is no indication that the jibaro technique was much practised. Fruit-bearing trees, however, were often scattered about a garden. A bamboo clump would serve as a windbreak, while brushwood fencing or a hedge would enclose the entire complex. The following examples seem to show that the T’ai-ho kitchen gardens held a certain diversity of plant species, and that the mixtures differed from one garden to

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78 Liu Sung, shih-chi, 8.41b (poem, for Lo Hui-ch’ing 姚老惠卿).
79 Liang Ch’ien, 6.13b-14b (preface to poems for Elder Yao 姚老人詩序).
80 Liu Sung, wen-chi, 6.18b-20b (inscription on the repair of the T’ien-i yuan, T’ai-ho county 泰和天一院重修記).
another, either in response to local conditions, or to the food preferences of this or that family, or to some small market opportunity. They also show that some of the literati contributed their own labor to subsistence gardens, and that they occasionally reflected upon the mixed anxieties and satisfactions connected with that labor.

The garden descriptions are vignettes, mostly poetic and always select, never complete. In the fourteenth century, on some estate in T’ai-ho, “light frost descends on the soybeans on the hilltop; sunset clouds rain their glow on the beds of amaranth.”\(^{81}\) The poet here contrasts soybeans in an outfield with the amaranth (cooked and eaten as a vegetable) in the garden bed. In another vignette, Liu Sung and some companions, passing along a road in winter, stopped to look into a well-hidden garden: “Where the streams from the back of the mountain converge, and a high stone path leads through the woods, we spotted the top of a tile roof outlined against the hill beyond, with thick hedging all around the place. So we spread apart the foliage and saw leeks in beds; we pulled aside the vines and there came to view a peach-tree by a creek.”\(^{82}\)

Lo Ch’in-shun (1465–1547) wrote of a garden, probably somewhere in the south part of T’ai-ho, “where the melon vines spread about after the rain, while in the grove, the oranges bend the boughs in mid-autumn.”\(^{83}\) Some garden description was off-season: “Melon vines in the garden, long bedraggled in the cold; the yam vines, too, have collapsed since the coming of fall. A light rain has wet the dark path below the flowers; a passing cloud has shaded over the bamboo-fringed pond.”\(^{84}\) A ruined garden, just west of the county seat, prompted this description sometime during the wars of the mid-fourteenth century: “The bamboo clump was long ago cut down, and the once-flourishing apricot trees are knocked flat. The fragrant fagara is drooped and wilting; the fine oranges, insect-ridden too.”\(^{85}\) In the sixteenth century, Hu Chih noted his own

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\(^{82}\) Ibid., 5.53ab (poem, late on the tenth day of the twelfth month... we viewed vegetable plots by a house 十二月十日晚…群從親舍旁蔬畦...).

\(^{83}\) Lo Ch’in-shun, 19.17b–18a (poem, felicitations for Hsiao Yu-jung 慶蕭有容...).

\(^{84}\) Liu Sung, *shi-h-chi*, 7.45b (poem, looking into a garden 見園).

\(^{85}\) Ibid., 2.23b–24a (poem, looking at West Garden 眺西園作).
garden in its seasonal decline: "The idled garden has everywhere grown to weeds, and the wattle gate is open now to the dogs and pigs. The last bitter oranges (Citrus aurantium) were picked after the frost, but a few vegetables still linger in the rain." 86

The luffa was an inedible but useful member of the melon family (its dried fibers made scouring pads). It also climbed and thus used little space, as Liu Sung noted in Ho-ch’i ward (township 65): "Several peasant homes lie hidden in the yellow bamboo; the road by here twists up and down the hills and ridges. The dogs bark at the wattle gate below the sweetgum tree, and, on this cold day, the luffa twines all along the hedge-fence." 87

A fiber crop like hemp might be posted to the outfields, but it might also be brought in and gardened. Ramie (Boehmeria nivea, a nettle), on the other hand, had to be gardened, and could not produce well if handled as an outfield crop. A perennial grown from rootstock, ramie requires intensive care—watering, heavy fertilizing, plus winter bedding, and periodic replanting. After laborious hand-processing, the stripped stems of this plant yield an excellent fabric called summer cloth or grasscloth. Liu Sung carefully described it:

Many families south of the Kan river raise ramie;
They first burn the soil, then next year they mound it, and fence it off.
When the old stems are harvested, new stems come up,
And you can get three harvests a year.
The girl of the family to the east, with her fine features,
Weaves white ramie and makes spring clothing.
Early in the morning she goes into the garden to defoliate the stalks;
She peels away the green skins, and comes away with an armful.
Next she goes and rinses the fibers in a pond,
Then, deftly using a round knife, she scrapes them:
It’s like snakes shedding their skins, or scales and bristles flying off.
You touch the clouds of fiber now, and their smoothness surprises you.
It’s taken her a month to ready everything for the loom. . . 88

The garden was, of course, principally a source of household food. Thanks to the mild climate, T’ai-ho gardens might provide

86 Hu Chih, A7.1ab (poem, on returning home from the Hai-chih ssu on an autumn day 秋日自海智寺歸家即事).
87 Liu Sung, shih-ch’i, 8.50a (poem, on the road at Ho-ch’i 和溪道中).
88 Ibid., 4.36ab (poem, stripping ramie 剃苧詞).
some fresh produce all year. Wang Chih (1379–1462) reminisced that around his home in the western suburb there were “about ten mou of garden, all planted to vegetables, mostly radish [not of course the European or American radish, but a plant closer to the Japanese daikon]. That we’d pick in winter, cut it up together with yam, add leek, salt, and bean paste, and boil for soup. Not even the rarest and richest of foods could surpass this, and everyone in the family loved to eat it.”

As was noted earlier, Liang Lan (1343–1410) ended a day’s work in his Willow Creek garden physically exhausted but spiritually euphoric. But as Liu Sung grubbed about his garden one spring day, his thoughts, more problematically, ran off in several very different directions. He thought of the coming harvest from his peach trees, now in blossom, and of the melons that, months hence, would ripen from the seeds he now held in his hand. He could dream ahead to “soft, sweet, golden yellow vegetables” and to “pickled, green-as-jade relish.” He had some firm ideas about gardening technique: hemp wants to have its roots widely spaced; peasants often sowed it too thickly, and got puny plants as a result. Similarly, when you plant melon, you must leave a lot of room for the vines to spread. The south side of the Kan river where he lived (in Chu-lin ward, township 38) featured a sandy alluvium, which was no good for water spinach (Ipomoea aquatica), or for “crystal onion”—a famous local specialty. Lettuce you eat raw, but rape-turnip you could pickle. He half thought of compiling a handbook on vegetables and a text on farming, but meanwhile he must have planted his seeds too deep, because nothing has germinated. If the weeds have flowered (he sighed as he hoed them up), then why haven’t the melons set fruit? The wheat on the high ridge is stunted and sere because it got no rain after it was planted last fall. Weeding is toilsome and unending. The millet has sprouted on the high ground to the east, but the weeds have gotten ahead of it; they must be taken out, else if it does rain, it will do the crop no good. He has planted (edible) chrysanthemums too close to a tree, which has since leafed out, and is now shading the plants, so that they look sickly.

89 Wang Chih, B37.35a–36a (appreciation of a painting of radish in the Wei-ts’ai studio 味菜軒畫蘆菔贊).
He wishes someone would come relieve him of the watering-pot, so that he can go eat. On top of it all, the tax-assessor has come by to register his mulberry and fruit trees.90

One may garden any crop one pleases, but traditional field agriculture in T’ai-ho, dry or wet, was limited to a narrow range of plants (rice, wheat, millet, taro, etc.) that can be seen to have certain features in common, foremost among these being an amenability to “mass production” techniques, including an ability to give satisfactory results despite relative neglect. If whatever was grown in gardens was worked at intensively, then whatever was grown in fields was something that could be handled extensively.

The greater the number of individual plants needed to produce a given amount of food, then the greater is the likelihood of that species being made an outfield crop in a subsistence landscape. And plant for plant, even rice yields very little. Thus as long as enough space is available in the landscape, rice along with the other grains will be exiled some distance from the homesite, where the plants and their fruits (kernels) will be handled in the greatest possible quantities on the fewest possible occasions. For the T’ai-ho literati, the location and nature of the staple crops clearly reduced their esthetic interest. The literati also had a rather distant attitude toward the episodic, massed labor that was commonly expended upon such crops.

Dry, that is non-irrigated, field crops known to have been raised in T’ai-ho county in Ming times included spring-ripening wheat, buckwheat, and millet, and fall-ripening soybeans. These were planted in any arable land that could not be turned into paddy, or, as occasionally in the case of soybeans, in harvested and drained paddy. In T’ai-ho, these crops provided common local foods (millet gruel, buckwheat cakes, bean paste, bean curd, etc.), and they probably also served to reduce total dependency on the main staple, which was rice. Taro is also mentioned as having been grown in fields, and must have been an important source of starch for some families.

90 Liu Sung, shih-chi, 2.7ab (poems on living in poverty 貧居二首); 2.7b-9b (poems on garden life 園居雜興八首); 7.34a-35a (poems on looking after the melons and vegetables in the east garden 東園課瓜菜十絕).
A few fleeting glimpses of dry field crops are available. A peasant hamlet, nestled against the march, is described well enough in a mid-fourteenth century poem that field crops can be distinguished from garden fairly sharply: “In the pass between the hills they grow wheat, and at the head of the pass, hemp. The door of the earthen hut is dark, no stir within. The neighbor’s yard is fenced against tigers, and in it, children feed a pet crow. Fine mountains, like green jade, rise on either side; flowing streams lace the garden plots, spilling white foam. Late in the day, the adults come home with their hoes in the light rain; poppies have dropped their petals all over the courtyard.”

At Nan-ch’üan (“South Drain,” in township 56) there is broad, level upland and “fruiting millet, thick in the fields.”

Along a twisting path that approaches a mountain hamlet, wheat has been planted in ridges of soil; by fall, these ridges would be weed-covered, and peasants might snare rabbits there. At Liu Sung’s home in Chu-lin ward (township 38), some of his wheat seems to be gardened, i.e. planted in “continuous beds” near mulberry, while the rest of it is planted out on “high ridges” beyond the reach of irrigation water, where, later perhaps, after the wheat is harvested, soybeans are sown. A slave delivers Liu the report that “sunshine in the irrigated fields has made the rice dark-green; rain on the hill-ridges has made the soybeans flower profusely.”

Because of severe population and livestock losses in the wars of the mid-fourteenth century, much agricultural land in T’ai-ho was temporarily abandoned. In these circumstances a truly extensive mode of field management was here and there adopted as the wars ended, creating for a time a very sharp contrast between outfield agriculture and intensive, homebound horticulture. Ancient words for fallow fields appear in the poetry; weeds and scrub were burned to provide an initial fertilizer of ash when the fallow was brought back into production. In a “three-or-four family hamlet” somewhere in northwest T’ai-ho, “the young children are looking for

91 Ibid., 6.35a (poem, again on the peasant house in the old ward 再和題故里田舍).
92 2.5b-6a (Crossing South Drain to visit a friend 過南圳訪友…).
93 2.7ab (cf. n. 90); 3.34b–35b (cf. n. 64); 6.30b–31a (poem, field family at Shui-k’ou 水口田家); 6.35b (poem, on my delight at the family slave’s arrival 喜家僮至); 8.16b (poem, mountain family at Shih-t’ang 石塘山家).
mandarin oranges; the peasant wives have been planting melon since daybreak. At midday they eat their fill of rice, then away they go to burn off the fallow fields." In T’ao-yuan ("Peach Spring" ward, township 12), "eight or nine families live by the green mountain; they set fires and then cultivate, and so are accustomed to using the weeding spade (hao-ch' an)." Such fields might lie at a considerable walking distance from the homestead: "the peasants are taking lunch in the newly-opened fallow, so their wattle-gated yards are quiet; a dog sleeps in the fallen flowers at the base of the fence." The burning of weeds and brush, accomplished during the fall or winter, made a notable spectacle. "The wind tosses the bright hot fire all about, and the mountains front and rear reflect the conflagration. When spring comes, the rains will break up the black ashes, and the wheat fields below the mountain will be loose and fertile." How long into the Ming the technique of fallowing and burning was continued is not known.

It was surely rice, however, that was the primary field crop in the landscape and economy of T’ai-ho in Ming times. This, the most productive of the earth’s staple grains, could be treated more and more as a horticultural item whenever population pressure on the land grew intense enough, as in some parts of China it did. In Ming T’ai-ho, such pressures apparently were seldom reached. Rice plants in T’ai-ho appear commonly to have been germinated in thick seed beds prior to their transplantation in the paddy fields, so there was something of an early horticultural phase in the life-cycle of rice. But, by and large, rice belonged to the realm of extensive grain cropping, although it stood in its own, rather peculiar domain, quite apart from the dry crops.

Essential to paddy rice in T’ai-ho was the diversion and manipulation of small streams running down from hills and mountains, and the modification of valley floors into a gently cascading series of small, level water-fields through the building of appropriately placed balks (some instances of this have already been given). Seasonal irregularities in water availability made it necessary to con-
struct gravity-flow reservoirs along the upper or middle courses of small streams (big streams, like the Kan, were useless for irrigating rice). This was commonly done by permanent, lateral diking (pei), which pushed a stream from one side, using natural formations on the other side to guide the flow into one or more holding pools, from which water could be released as needed. Along the lower courses of streams, it was often necessary to lift the water to field level, and this was sometimes done by meeting the stream head-on through the building of either permanent or temporary dams.

The laying out of the basic infrastructure, the continued need for upkeep and repair, and the perennial problems of water supply and distribution ensured that rice agriculture could not normally be accomplished by one family, or one hamlet. In Ming T’ai-ho, the problems of rice-growing were often handled through a landlord-tenant system, which drew in the peasant hamlets described earlier, or alternatively by slaves working under the close supervision of their master.

Among the T’ai-ho literati, only Liu Sung ever reflected esthetically upon paddy as it lay in the larger landscape, and then but once, where he also inserted a slight down-note: "‘It’s the third month of the year, and the sun and wind have just followed the rain; below the mountain, ricefield after ricefield is deep in rolling water. The sprouts make a single sheet, like green fabric; but when the wild spotted ducks come, they’ll have no place to alight.’"98 What accounts for the curious disproportion between the prominence of rice in the landscape and in the economy, and the paucity of references to it in the poetry and descriptive prose of the local literati? To the Western eye, the rice paddies of interior south China have a picturesque quality suggestive, at certain times of year, of lush green lawns, but in China they must nowhere have been considered particularly attractive, witness the rarity of their depiction in traditional Chinese landscape art.

Nor was ricefield labor at all discussed by the T’ai-ho literati, even though Wang Chih said he once guided a plow through a paddy, and Liu Sung once helped carry sheaves. Why the omission, given that the literati did discuss garden labor in detail? The answer

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98 8.26a (poem, clearing after rain 雨晴).
does not, apparently, lie in an aversion to physical labor as such. It may have something to do with the cooperative, massed character of the labor conducted in ricefields, often under supervision, and to group singing, or the beat of a gong. A literatus as gardener worked alone or nearly so, and could see and think about the results of his own work. The paddy laborer was but part of a team, a worker whose individual effort was lost somewhere in the team’s final product. In all probability, the literati looked at ricefield labor across a great social chasm, much as they looked at the communalism of peasant life: admirable perhaps, but socially distant and alien.

Beyond the fields lay the vast marches of T’ai-ho. If gardened spaces were small, heavily worked, and tended constantly, and fields larger, worked spasmodically, and visited frequently, then the march lands were spaces that were vast, untended, and visited only occasionally. Their relative neglect surely did not mean that the marches were inconsequential to livelihood. In fact, of the three zones, it may have been the agricultural that ranked last. At least one gathers as much from Wang Chen’s Nung shu of 1313, a monument in China’s technical literature on farming. According to Wang Chen (who was once a magistrate in northern Kiangsi), the pioneer homesteader should locate himself below a mountain and near water, use grass, brush, and other materials close at hand for building, and lay out vegetable beds first of all. Then, if the opportunity arises later, he may extend his farming space to include the fruits, fibers, and grains. 99

As may be ascertained from fiscal data from the year 1610 (and largely confirmed by a U.S. Army map of 1954), T’ai-ho contained some 144 to 147 square miles of rice paddy, some fourteen percent of its total area. Thus something approaching eighty-five percent of all available space in the county will have been given over to nemoral pursuits of many different kinds: grazing, hunting, gathering, mining, industry, and the like.

Land-use zones that shaped themselves around settlements in the flatter parts of medieval Europe had, starting from a settlement and proceeding outwards from it, first gardens, then plowed fields, then a degraded “boundary forest” (home of herbs, wild fruit, game,

small timber for fuel and carpentry, foliage for fodder, glades or "lawns" for grazing, and perhaps some mining or industry. Outermost lay wilderness, with big virgin timber. 100

T’ai-ho county diverged slightly from this pattern, because its rough, unglaciated topography ensured that flat, farmed land regularly met slope not gradually, but at sharp, abrupt angles. In T’ai-ho, it was elevation as well as distance that dictated the location of nemoral space. As has been noted earlier, homesites in T’ai-ho often backed directly into the base of some steep incline, so as to afford the inhabitants a convenient avenue of access into the semiwild and its resources. Thus a fairly distant ring in a flat landscape of old Europe might begin as a very close one in T’ai-ho.

Among the many essential uses for T’ai-ho’s vast march country was the grazing of livestock. In the absence of fodder rotations in field cropping, or of specially maintained and fenced meadow, grazing in T’ai-ho county in Ming times was conducted at some distance from homesites, in grassy glades and patches.

The grazing animals were goats (yang) and "yellow cows" or zebu cattle (niu, huang-niu). In Kiangsi, the massive water buffalo seems always to have predominated in the great lake plains of the north. The zebu is a smaller animal whose lighter build and lesser strength are counterbalanced by lower forage requirements, and especially by its superior ability to negotiate steep inclines and craggy rocks in search of scarce grass. 101 It and not the water buffalo appears to have been the predominant bovine in T’ai-ho.

A zebu cow was a costly investment—for T’ai-ho’s resident Confucian philosopher Lo Ch’in-shun (1465–1547), as well as for the lowliest peasant. 102 In a mid-fourteenth-century poem, Liu Sung told of a peasant family that had tended its cow as carefully as it had the children. "They went lightly with the whip, so as not to hurt it, and when one winter snow and frost killed all the green grass, they fed it salted soup and rice chaff. They grieved to see it thin, as their

100 John Brinckerhoff Jackson, Discovering the Vernacular Landscape (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), pp. 45–47.
102 Lo Ch’in-shun, 16.17ab (poem, song of the Hsueh-ku lou 學古樓歌).
lives depended on it. They kept it warm and dry in its wooden-doored earthen stall, and day and night they guarded it carefully against theft.” Despite the care, the cow came to a sad end, seized by a marauding army, and driven off to be slaughtered for its meat.\textsuperscript{103}

The main purpose of the cow was to plow the ricefields in the spring, but sometimes other uses were devised. In the late fourteenth century, a peasant from a hamlet “by the bamboo grove, where three or four families live, and the path down to the river makes a bend,” saved enough to buy a young cow, which he then hitched to a cart to haul water.\textsuperscript{104}

One can follow these animals as they move, under constant human supervision, from their shelters near the homestead out to the marches to graze, and back again. Chou Shih-hsiu’s late fourteenth-century poem follows a herder with his long flute as he takes his yellow cows further and further off. The cows have already chewed away the grass on the sandspits and creek margins, so the herder takes them on first to a “good place to the west, where rich grass grows on the open slope and flat hilltop,” and when they have eaten that, he moves them to “a remote valley where no one goes, where the cows caw and the wild goats [takins?] run by,” where they must chew on clumps of ear-high grass growing among sharp, flesh-tearing rocks.\textsuperscript{105} Animals homeward bound from grazing are pictured in a different part of T’ai-ho in the fourteenth century, when sometimes the elderly members of the Hsiao people of Shih-kang (“Stone Hill,” township 10), having “strolled with their canes out along the field balks, would come home in the evening in the company of a slave or two, singing songs as they followed behind the returning herd of cows and goats.”\textsuperscript{106}

A basic characteristic of march country is an alternation of open glades with wooded groves, and therefore the T’ai-ho herders (\textit{mu-t’ung}) regularly crossed paths with wood-gatherers (\textit{ch’iao}) as they made their way, inbound or outbound, from centers of settlement. Wood collectors were not lumbermen, felling whole trees or clearcut-

\textsuperscript{103} Liu Sung, \textit{shih-chi}, 4.35ab (poem, lament for the cow 養牛歌).
\textsuperscript{104} Chou Shih-hsiu, 3.4ab (cf. n. 75).
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., 2.6b–7a (herder’s song 牧童謠).
ting forest patches. They were, rather, harvesters of woody suckers and branches, dry or green, that they bundled and portered for sale or their own use as fuel, material for fences, fodder, or compost.

The technical name for this activity is coppicing, and a coppice (or copse) is a grove of trees that periodically undergoes heavy pruning. Coppicing keeps trees in the rapid growth phase of their life-cycles, which permits very high rates of annual per-acre output, ten or more times as much as in unmanaged or clear-cut forest.107 Many of the common trees to be found in the marches of T’ai-ho county in Ming times (e.g. willows, ailanthus, osmanthus, evergreen oaks, etc.) would have responded well to such treatment.

In the nemoral landscape of T’ao-yuan in township 12, one might have encountered, as Liu Sung did in the fourteenth century, “a mountain girl, carrying off firewood on her back, her hair hanging down in two braids.”108 Perhaps her home was nearby, tucked into the foot of a coppiced slope. Peasant families found it convenient to settle thus, with both “fields and brush near at hand,” where at sundown the menfolk might be found just after they had returned with their loads of fuel, laughing and sharing out cups of rice-beer, and lying down placidly drunk in their rude doorways.109

City residents did not enjoy proximity to coppiced space, and so they were, accordingly, compelled to buy their fuel in the city markets. To service their needs, whole families of full-time wood-collectors made their homes right in the mountainous country to the north and west of T’ai-ho city. At Ma-shan (“Horse Mountain” in township 47), near some of the tombs of the Ch’ing-ch’i Yang lineage, and the Taoist “Temple of the Great Mystery” (T’ai-hsuan kuan), lived some dozen families in the sixteenth century, all of the same surname, and all of them woodsmen. From Teng-k’o-ling (“Mount Success-in-the-Examinations”), about two miles north of the city, wood-collectors and herdsmen of the early fifteenth century followed a well worn path along a ravine that led from highland brush and forage down to city markets. Commercial gathering, aimed at regular sales in the city, also afforded a living for

108 Liu Sung, shih-chi, 1.36b–37a (cf. n. 81).
109 Chou Shih-hsiu, 3.4ab (cf. n. 75); Liu Sung, 2.19b (cf. n. 73).
several other families who lived contentedly enough "in thatched huts deep in the woods." Chou Shih-hsiu described them one morning in the fourteenth century, as they sharpened their hatchets on whetstones, and then set off with their vine-ropes "right up the green mountain." They had already taken enough deadwood and ailanthus, and now they were after green branches and osmanthus. These they planned to bundle and take directly to the city for sale. With the proceeds, they figured to buy rice and other foodstuffs for their parents and dependents back home. Their occupation allowed them legally to escape the tax and service responsibilities that burdened most people.\footnote{Lo Ch’in-shun, 19.13b–14a (poem and commentary); Ch’en Hsun, poems section, 3.16a–18a (eight scenes from the library at Pei-ch’i 北溪書舍八景); Chou Shih-hsiu, 2.7ab (wood-collector’s song 樵夫謠).}

The wood-collector escaped not only taxes and services, but the farmer’s anxieties over flood or drought as well. But while the people of medieval Europe tended to regard the woodcutters and other denizens of the wilderness margins with suspicion, the literati of T’ai-ho saw them as harmless. Indeed, behind every real wood-gatherer stood symbolically some local literatus, envious of his fiscal and spiritual freedoms, and attracted to the esthetic setting of his laboring routines. Thus Wang Huan (d. 1423) of Mei-kang (‘‘Apricot Hill,’’ township 8) styled himself ‘‘Wood-gatherer,’’ and named the small building housing his private study the ‘‘Studio of the Wood-gatherer in the Snow’’ (Ch’iao-hsueh chai).\footnote{Yang Shih-ch’i, A2.12b–14a (inscription for the Ch’iao-hsueh studio 樵雪齋記).}

And what may have been mere idle conceit for Wang Huan was a matter of romantic, hands-on engagement for Hu Yun-chung, a failed but proud examination taker of the late fourteenth century. ‘‘He is,’’ wrote his friend Chou Shih-hsiu,

attracted to the mountains and the thick greenery south of his home, and whenever he can take the time from managing his fields and gardens, he puts on a headband of kudzu cloth, fetches a feather parasol, and, accompanied by a young slave (t’ung), proceeds hatchet in hand to a place he likes, where a stream splashes over rocks under a dark canopy of pine and bamboo, and there he amuses himself gathering brush. His explanation is this:

‘‘Men are born into this world with different inclinations. Some you see like flies or birds, thronging and swarming in noisy markets, competing for goods and pro-
fits, and finding joy in maximizing their take. Such men have gone irretrievably astray, and cannot know the true happiness possessed by us wood-gatherers.

“As for me, I set out in the morning as the sun rises, the fog lifts, and a lone cloud floats by. I wade across a clear stream, sit enraptured under a dense tree, and let out a long yell as the wind starts to pick up. Not even the immortals beyond this world have a greater contentment. Mind you, I’m not like Chu Mai-ch’en of the Han Dynasty, who grubbed bent-backed for firewood, just working until the day he could achieve office at last. When I finish cutting branches late in the day, the setting sun is on the mountains, the smoky landscape darkens, the calls of the wildlife echo back and forth, and deer pass by in file. Then I grope my way back through the vines and out of the valley, parting the thickets and traversing the wild moor, with hardly enough of a bundle to cook a pot of bean soup with. As I reach my gate, my children welcome me—unlike Chu Mai-ch’en, ambitious but stooped with toil, whose foolish wife deserted him.

“Home now from collecting, the moon rises over the upper story where I have zither and books and the mats spread out. I lean out and view all creation, then I order up rice-beer and drink as I like. I don’t know whether Heaven and Earth can provide any greater contentment than this. After all, luxurious villas and pleasure gardens eventually fall to ruin, and the status and perquisites of office are surely vulnerable to abrupt loss. I find no pleasure in those, and I guess that’s why I find it in wood-collecting.”

Alongside such amateurish wood-gathering, the literati of early Ming T’ai-ho also entered march country for wild and medicinal plants, which engaged their practical, scholarly, and esthetic interests. Some built mountain houses right in the march. Behind one such house, early in the Ming, “a green mountain loses itself in clouds,” and “along the cliffs to the west, one can sometimes see deer herds pass by.” The owner had put medicinal plants out to dry by an unfrequented, pine-sided window. In Shen-ch’i (“Deep Creek,” township 4), a special house was built in the march for an ill parent, close to the sources of curative herbs, which were bundled and placed in the courtyard. Inside the home of Hsiao Tz’u (d.1464, of Nan-ch’i, township 59), medicinal plants hung along a special rafter, and on a rainy day in spring, the camphor-like odor of the dried birthwort (Asarum sp.) was particularly fragrant.

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112 Chou Shih-hsiu, 4.36a–39a (biographical sketch of a southern wood-collector who found the true way 南樵道者傳).
113 Liu Sung, shih-chi, 8.14b (poem, visit to the mountain home of the secluded gentleman Hu 訪胡隱君山居).
Amateur botanizing was in vogue in T’ai-ho among the literati early in the Ming. Liu Sung recounted seeing on a mountain path near Shuang-chiang-k’ou (near township 66) an odd plant that for lack of flowers he could not identify, and so he picked it in the hope that some local resident might be able to tell him what it was.\(^{115}\) Liang Ch’ien (1366–1418) and his friends liked to read and discuss medical texts (the *Internal Classic of the Yellow Emperor* and its commentaries) and take plant-hunting field trips along the upper reaches of the creeks in the back country. Accompanied by a servant carrying a box, they would stop to taste the herbs they found, make drawings of them, and deposit the specimens in the box, talking all the while. Finally, as darkness fell, they would grope their way home through the vines.\(^{116}\)

The occasional wild species was sometimes simply noted, without reference to its possible uses, medicinal or otherwise. Liu Sung passed by a *chu-yü* tree as it spread its aroma along a road in Ho-ch’i, township 65. Its notable fragrance probably identifies this one as the *Wu chu-yü* or *Evodia rutaecarpa*, with its medicinal fruits, not noted by Liu.\(^{117}\) It was presumably a wild climbing evergreen fig (*Ficus pumila*) that Liu saw twining up among the bamboo at the water’s edge in Ho-ch’i.\(^{118}\) Along the southeastern edge of the county, a glimpse could be had from a small library window of “the wild green woods on the mountains, with the wind rising, and the dew not yet dry on the green and yellow mountain orange,”—that is, the *Fortunella hindsii*, a relative of the kumquat.\(^{119}\) No indication is given whether, or how, these plants were used, but some sense of the variety, and here and there the density, of the understory flora in the march country of early Ming T’ai-ho is well conveyed.

Early in the Ming, then, the literati and common people of T’ai-ho regularly walked the marches in search of brush and herbs, variously for consumption, sale, or recreation. Both classes hunted

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\(^{115}\) Liu Sung, *shih-chi*, 7.15a (poem, accompanying Shu Po-yuan over the bridge from Shuang-ch’i-k’ou 同許伯源自雙溪口度橋…).

\(^{116}\) Liang Ch’ien, 6.55a–56b (message for Yen Yuan [Hsuan]-yen 贈嚴元[玄]晏序).

\(^{117}\) Liu Sung, *shih-chi*, 6.51a (poem, on the road at Ho-ch’i on the ninth day 九日和溪道中…).

\(^{118}\) Ibid., 6.51b (poem, on the old fisherman’s secluded home at Ho-ch’i 題和溪釣叟幽居).

\(^{119}\) 5.91b (poem, the gardens and ponds of the Hsiao of Yung-t’ing canton 雲亭蕭氏園池雅興…).
as well. Among the fauna known to have inhabited the marches were rabbit, several species of deer, fox, boar, "mountain ox" (perhaps takin), tiger, and one or more species of primate.¹²⁰

One could hear the chatter of apes or monkeys of some sort in the highest, isolated mountains of the southern perimeter of the county in the mid-fourteenth century, and they are known to have lived in the higher parts of Mt. Wu (about ten miles west of the county seat) as late as the early eighteenth. They were hunted and sold for their fur, or as pets.¹²¹

Early in the Ming, elite sportsmen, alone or in parties, penetrated the wild in pursuit of game. Liu Sung's nephew Liu Chung-ch'i (of T'ai-yuan, township 33) was "as a youth unusually spirited and fond of hunting from horseback with bow and arrow. Once accompanying a hunting party deep in the mountains, he came upon a fierce tiger, and riding ahead alone, he killed it. The experience strengthened his mind."¹²²

While such "baronial" standards of behavior were still accepted (as early in the Ming they were), gentlemen also hunted with trained dogs, "long accustomed to their master's habits, responding eagerly to his looks and gestures," as they plunged through thorn-thickets and sharp rocks after fleeing quarry.¹²³ Rugged terrain provided a good setting for excitement and sudden drama; a remote ravine in the mountains along the southeastern perimeter of the county set the stage for Hu Ju-lin (stalwart and gregarious member of a "big house," student of the Confucian classics, and a sporting huntsman) when a tiger jumped him before he could cock the trigger of his crossbow. Eventually wood Collectors, hearing a din, came to investigate. They found Hu prostrate and unconscious but the tiger unable to kill him, because Hu's favorite hunting dog, though overmatched, managed to keep harassing it. The woodsmen chased off the tiger, but when Hu revived and offered them rewards, they declined, arguing that it was the dog and not they that had really saved his life. When the dog died of its wounds a few

¹²⁰ THHC 2.22b ff., data taken from the Hung-chih (1488–1505) gazetteer.
¹²¹ Liu Sung, shih-chi, 5.91b (cf. n. 119); CAFC 50.24b–25a; 53.32b.
¹²² Liang Ch'ien, 16.14b–16a (colophon to epitaph 題劉州判墓銘後).
¹²³ Liu Sung, shih-chi, 2.14b (poem on hunting dogs 獵犬篇).
days later, Hu gave it an elaborate, human-style burial. If the display seemed jocular, the sentiment was surely sincere.

Peasants, settled on the edges of the tiger-infested wilds of the southeastern part of T’ai-ho, were also vulnerable to alarming feline intrusions. In the still of a moonlit night one might be jolted awake by the clamor of squawking chickens, bellowing cattle, barking dogs, and yelling men with bamboo sticks roused to chase off a prowling tiger. The big cats were also known to attack in broad daylight, crouching as one did in thick grass, then springing upon the back of a grazing yellow cow, tearing its flesh and bloodying it, until finally the menfolk drove it away.

The value of wild game was such that its depletion, as happened in the canton of Hsien-ch’a by at least the mid-Ming, was occasion for the organization of a rural compact (hsiang yueh) through which hunting and fishing restrictions were imposed. Yet game still abounded in the mountains of the county’s southeastern border as late as the mid-seventeenth century, as specialized, non-elite “hunting households” (she-hu) lived there in sufficient number to merit their incorporation into a county defense militia. Still, it appears that as hunting was being pushed ever further outward in space, it declined in social esteem; literati sport hunting seems to have died out later in the Ming, partly under pressure from a revived set of Buddhist values, with their animal-releasing rituals, and their revulsion against all meat and slaughter.

There also took place fishing on the natural watercourses, large and small, that flowed through T’ai-ho county. The “wild” waters in question can be usefully contrasted with the tamed waters in wells and ponds: as cultivated soil yielded crops, so cultivated waters in T’ai-ho’s many manmade ponds and reservoirs were used for breeding fish. But just as hunters and gatherers regularly penetrated march country for subsistence or sport, so too fishermen took to the wild waters to plunder nature’s own supply of fish.

One might find fishing folk living two families, ten mouths, in

124 Chou Shih-hsiu, 4.32b–33a (accounts of three righteous acts 三義傳).
125 Liu Sung, shih-chi, 8.20b (poem, night alarm 夜驚).
126 Ibid., 4.44ab (poem, cow and tiger 牛虎行).
127 Ou-yang To, 18.6a–8a (epitaph for Hsiao Hsien 蕭先, 1472–1539).
128 THHC 19.48a ff.
a small, broad-beamed boat.\textsuperscript{129} An oldest son might work the net, a second son the oar, while the youngest did the cooking.\textsuperscript{130} In the late fourteenth century, somewhere near township 6\textsuperscript{6}, a fishing family fished through the four seasons of the year; the father sang as he rowed out on the broad Ho shui (‘Grain River’), and though some of his family used fishing cormorants, he preferred using nets. Toward nightfall, they would dock on the riverbank and collect their cooking fuel right there. They all had food and clothes enough, even though they did not plow or plant.\textsuperscript{131}

In the early fifteenth century, Yen Tsung-tan was locally known as an eccentric sporting fisherman, taking his boat back and forth along the big Kan river between T’ai-ho and Kan-chou city some 75 miles south, and insisting upon using a fishing-pole, not nets, so as to advertise that he did not have to make a living at this pursuit. Though he lacked learning, ‘‘he was polite to the students and scholars he met, and did not act boorishly with them.’’\textsuperscript{132} There were also land-bound sport fishermen, like the arrogant but convivial Liu Ang (1372–1429). His estate in Tung-ch’ang ward (tow nship 41) bordered upon some islands and flats toward the mouth of a small Kan tributary. His parties featured zither-playing, singing, and board games, until he and his guests grew tired of those amusements, whereupon they would all take rice-beer and go down to the river and fish.\textsuperscript{133}

It is into the nemoral reaches that one must look for examples of what little industry and mining T’ai-ho county had in Ming times. T’ai-ho’s few industries could be found in remote sites, surrounded by near wilderness, where water power, fuel, and raw materials were available. In the extreme southeast, about 25 straight-line miles from the county seat, modern detailed maps show a small but conspicuous expanse of irrigated rice hedged about by rugged mountains. That was the site of Lang-ch’uan ward, township 26, in Yun-

\textsuperscript{129} Ch’en Mo 陳謨 (1305–ca. 1389), \textit{Hai-sang chi} 海桑集 \textit{(SKSCP, 4th ser.)}, 2.29a (poem, on a painting of fishing joys 魚釣圖).

\textsuperscript{130} Yang Shih-ch’i, B62.43a–44b (poem, fishing in autumn 秋漁).

\textsuperscript{131} Chou Shih-hsiu, 2.6a (fisherman’s song 漁郎謡).

\textsuperscript{132} Yang Shih-ch’i, B43.14a–15a (biography of the fisherman of the rapids 釣瀨子傳).

\textsuperscript{133} Wang Chih, A5.5b–7a (preface to funeral poems for Liu Chung-kao [Liu Ang] 劉仲高換詩序); Yang Shih-ch’i, B32.11b–13a (epitaph).
t’ing canton. Access to it was by way of a long, narrow ravine some ten miles in length. "The cliffs on either side embrace hundreds of mountain peaks," wrote Liu Sung in a fourteenth-century poem. "Creeks cross and recross the road, skirting and piercing the grass; daylight lights but half the forest, the rest [the opposite side] is secluded pine. Here a water-driven triphammer is at work in the autumn rain; there a kiln burning stone pours thick smoke into the evening air. . . ." 134

From the twelfth century, China’s paper industry began to move into remote mountain country in search of bamboo, then a new raw material for making paper. In this connection, the industrial valley of Lang-ch’uan came to produce a high-grade bamboo paper, good enough that the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368) used it as stock for its printed currency. The county also produced modest quantities of a fine-quality "furry-edged" paper from the Ming period on into modern times. 135

Mining, like industry, is an activity of uncultivated space, or of space rendered uncultivable. As it happened, T’ai-ho’s two gypsum mines were each located within a few miles of the county seat, where ugly evidence of occasional attempts at large-scale digging were easily visible. Mining was widely believed to injure the great veins that, in geomantic theory, sent vital forces coursing through the county landscape. In the view of the literati, small-scale peasant digging was tolerable, but ambitious tunneling and shafting by greedy entrepreneurs was not. In Chung-pu ward (township 6), "pile after pile of mine tailings" signalled to Liu Sung what was afoot in the latter part of the fourteenth century. Pinkish gypsum, in veins several inches thick, "white dragon bones hidden deep in the yellow earth," attracted the operators, despite official bans. Miners with basket-encased lamps bored deep into the gypsum-laden hills, and, so strong was the lure of profit, that even when the tunnels collapsed ahead, those behind dug on all the same. Liu had no objection to people taking a little gypsum to steam or dissolve for medicinal purposes, but the huge output at Chung-pu was instead mixed with salt

134 Liu Sung, shih-chi, 6.29ab (poem, Lang-ch’uan 閬川).
from Kwangtung, then heated to achieve a uniform color, and finally distributed to retail salt merchants, who would rush off with their boats and carts full, never bothering to check the illegally adulterated stuff for taste. The noxious business threatened "irreparable damage to the earth's veins." Liu could only wish that some god would go there and trample everything flat.\textsuperscript{136}

The other deposit, whiter gypsum in thinner veins, lay in one or more of the hills in the vicinity of Mt. Wu, about ten miles west of the county seat. Local peasants used a little of this gypsum to make bean-curd for sale, and physicians sometimes used it to make "medicinal cakes." That was legitimate. But several times in the Ming era, big operators would open the works, assembling laborers from among vagrants and undesirables (who were accused of conducting robberies at night, after work), until tunnel collapses and a great public outcry would shut the business down. Early in the seventeenth century a local entrepreneur tried to open the Mt. Wu works yet again, this time as an imperial monopoly under eunuch patronage. An effective memorial of protest against this outrage listed as its chief objections to the enterprise the very low per-load (\textit{tan}) price of gypsum, the inevitable damage to the homes, graves, and fields of nearby residents, and the threat to the survival of Mt. Wu as a central node in the geomantic network of living earth that nourished both prefecture and county.\textsuperscript{137}

The literati dislike for gouging the earth extended to deep wells, but curiously it did not extend to the ravages of soil erosion. In fact, the only early discussion of soil erosion focused upon its visually positive effects. In 1367, Liu Sung and his brother discovered a place, perhaps somewhere in township 41, where a stream had cut so low a canyon through an agricultural plain that the farmers could not reach it for irrigation. Long ago, a big dam had been built to remedy this problem, and over time, the water falling into the spillway below the dam had eaten away an enormous hole full of fantastic erosional formations. Liu Sung gave the scene a long, detailed, esthetic description.\textsuperscript{138}

\textsuperscript{136} Liu Sung, \textit{shih-chi}, 4.58b–59a (poem, on gypsum 石膏行).
\textsuperscript{137} \textit{THHC}, 2.22b ff.; \textit{CHTC} 49.9a ff.
\textsuperscript{138} Liu Sung, \textit{wen-chi}, 6.4a–6a (inscription for Wa-ch'üan 崖泉記).
Most of T’ai-ho’s march country seems to have been *res communis*, neither owned nor taxed, but picked over at will within whatever loose restrictions local custom or agreement may have imposed. To this a major exception was tombsites, preferably and typically located on uncultivable, semi-wild, sloping land. In T’ai-ho these sites were selected with the advice of professional geomancers, and the tombs carefully constructed, so that the ancestors, comfortably interred in their shallow, hillside niches, might forever radiate good influences upon their living descendants. Subtle and exacting criteria for good tomb location ensured intense competition for choice sites, and that competition in turn forced the growth of legal protection for assertions of ownership. (A late fifteenth-century magistrate complained that the bulk of the litigation he handled centered upon disputes over tombsites.)

Burial was not collective. The tombs of the great lineages and common descent groups were usually scattered far and wide, making upkeep and seasonal visits major efforts in management and logistics. In 1439, it took the imperial Grand Secretary Yang Shih-ch’i more than a month to tour by sedan chair thirty-two scattered ancestral tombs in T’ai-ho county alone (there were yet other tombs in neighboring counties). He found one tombsite encroached upon by homebuilders and by ‘more than thirty’ illicit burials, and he directed that the offenders be prosecuted at once. He mentioned by name eighteen tombwatchers (none of them Yangs) who were authorized to receive payments of cloth or cash whenever the Yang kinsmen should appear on their seasonal visits.

The Yang tombs also had a role to play in the subsistence economy. Yang Shih-ch’i instructed his junior kinsmen that each of their families should take turns cutting grass and brush off the tumuli, in order that each might get an equal share of the fuel. He also had them issue permits to the tombwatchers, empowering them to harvest the brush along the outskirts of the tombs. No one was to cut trees off the gravesites, however, unless they grew thick enough to harbor tigers or snakes, in which case the culled trees were to be evenly divided among the Yang families.

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139 T’an Sheng 譚昇, poem on popular customs 風俗, in *CAFC* 50.57b.
140 Yang Shih-ch’i, B50.1a–8a (record of tomb visits 展墓錄); B53.4b–5b, 14b–15b (letters to family members).
The tombs in T’ai-ho’s nemoral hillsides were sacred, yet nemoral space never quite acquired the transcendant aura that it once had in the various paganisms of the West. No Diana coursed in T’ai-ho’s groves and glades; no druids conducted rites under holy clumps of trees. The Podocarpus trees, male and female, that grew by a Buddhist hermitage in Ku-kang (“Old Hill,” township 22) elicited appreciation and curiosity over their strange diecious botany, but they suggested nothing holy.141 Sacred space in T’ai-ho lay at the highest elevations, on the mountaintops, as will be noted later.

In conclusion, then, three principal regimes of land use have been singled out: the horticultural, the agricultural, and the nemoral. They have been discussed in descending order of the frequency with which the land devoted to them was visited and worked by the inhabitants of a given center of settlement. It has been argued that as the working energies of the people were perforce concentrated heaviest near their homes, scattering and fading with increasing distance, so the basic pattern of land use evolved, with each land-use zone contributing its specific range of essential goods to the subsistence economy. Early in the Ming, the literati participated in their own way in this economy, describing it, rhapsodizing upon it, and personally taking part in those activities (like gardening, wood-collecting, or hunting) whose marginal productivity was high.

There were, to be sure, some ambiguous complications in this simple trizonal system. Where in it, for example, does one place afforestation? Here and there in the Ming period, members of affluent common descent groups removed nemoral, cut-over scrub from certain hillsides and planted patches of single-species forest in its place. Examples include the Yang of Shang-yuan-t’ang (“Upper Spring Pond,” township 43), and the Tseng of Tang-yuan (township 29), who reportedly pioneered the local planting of the China fir (shan, probably Cunninghamia sinensis) around the mid-fifteenth century.142 The Kuo lineage, already domiciled for centuries at Kao-p’ing (township 61) when Liu Sung wrote about them, had long-established plantings of pine, camphor, and three

141 CAFC 53.81a.
142 Wang Chih, B5.10a-12a (inscription for Shang-yuan-t’ang 上源塘記); THHC 2.22b ff.
species of oak, among which "the taller trees reach to the clouds, while the shorter blanket the mountains; their yield provides fuel, and material for the making of things."143 In the sixteenth century, Yin Ch’u-yung of Kuan-ch’i ("Irrigation Creek," township 14) planted "several li of pine (i.e., rows of pine totalling about a mile in length?) which successfully grew into a forest. He offered the advice that pine will not flourish just anywhere, but requires an appropriate topography: "The pine tree is dark in color and grows very tall. If it is not well-rooted, it will grow twisted and skewed and won’t mature properly. That is why it must be planted on level hilltops and broad elevations. It is useless to plant such places to crops, because weeds will shade them out and the scrub will defeat them, which is another reason why pine is best there."144

Another ambiguity was the survival in T’ai-ho of watery or marshy places where useful lines of what probably were endogenous species managed to hold their own against the encroachments of garden and field. Water plants such as sweet flag (Calamus sp.), water shield (Brasenia), water caltrop (Trapa), perennial wild rice (Zizania), cattail (Typha), arrowhead (Sagittaria), and fringed water lily (Limnanthemum) grew in such places. All of them were consumable as famine foods, or as delicacies, and seem to have been remnants of a primordial southern diet of "water shield, eels, wild rice, taro soup, [and] baked turtle," constituents in what Hui-lin Li has called a "distinct system" of aquaculture.145 All the plants can, of course, be deliberately cultivated, but in T’ai-ho their description often suggests a wild or semi-wild state.

Local description also includes, sometimes alongside the water-plants listed above, weedy terrestrial plants that were confined only with the greatest difficulty to narrow marginal locations, always threatening to spread forth again at the slightest opportunity. Some of these weeds too were used as famine foods.

143 Liu Sung, wen-chi, 14.12a–13b (cf. n. 58).
144 Ou-yang Te 歐陽德 (1496–1554), Ou-yang Nan-yeh hsien-sheng wen-chi 歐陽南野先生文集 (1558 woodblock ed.), 17.19b–21a (preface to poems on Sung-kang, dated 1533 松岡詩序).
Wild rice grew in thick clumps where fishermen in their boats might encounter it.\(^{146}\) Somewhere near Liu Sung’s home, ‘‘in the spring wind, mulberry trees fringe the continuous plots of wheat; and in the autumn rain, wild rice and cattail front the pine-covered slope.’’\(^{147}\) Here the poet has contrasted the thin filament of one stand against the broad patch of the other. During the wars of the mid-fourteenth century, starving children took baskets out to the idled fields, and though it was already early spring, nothing was green, owing to an exceptionally cold winter; ‘‘the cattail and the fringed water lily haven’t yet sprouted at the water’s edge, but the sweet shepherd’s purse (\textit{Capsella bursa-pastoris}) has emerged from the mud and flowered,’’ and so they picked that to eat.\(^{148}\) In township 56, ‘‘a deep wood encloses an empty guesthouse. . . , the flowering water shield grows broad-leaved in the creek.’’\(^{149}\)

When garden vegetables failed for lack of water, Liu Sung and Wang Tzu-ch’i contented themselves with a pauper’s soup of lamb’s quarters (\textit{Chenopodium} sp.).\(^{150}\) Wild amaranth (probably \textit{Amaranthus viridis}) spread as a ‘‘traveller’’ in fall gardens, and if the melon vines were bug-ridden, and the eggplant weed-choked, one might be pleased enough to pick it to boil for soup, or chop for pickling.\(^{151}\) At the homestead of the Wen family near Mt. Wu, shepherd’s purse grew apace with the wheat in the spring snow.\(^{152}\) The weedy cereal called \textit{pai} (\textit{Echinochloa crus-galli}) could grow either in abandoned dry fields, or, as a rice-mimic, in wet places; ‘‘starvelings, thin as storks,’’ went into deserted fields to harvest it in famine times. On an ‘‘old mountain estate, inhabited by a few families with their dogs and chickens, the hamlet is desolate after the wars, and plowmen are few, and so the cattail and the \textit{pai} stand tall in fields flooded by fall rains.’’\(^{153}\)

\(^{146}\) Liu Sung, \textit{shih-chi}, 6.51ab (poem, on Liu Ken’s mountain estate 羅長山莊).
\(^{147}\) Ibid., 3.34b–35b (cf. n. 64).
\(^{148}\) 4.31b–32a (poem, picking wild vegetables 採野菜).
\(^{149}\) 2.5b–6a (cf. n. 92).
\(^{150}\) 2.1b–2a (poem about a reclusive garden-waterer 南園隱詩); 2.10b–11a (poem, distress over the drought 懊旱).
\(^{151}\) 4.71a (poem, in the east garden, wild amaranth spreads of itself in the autumn rain 東園秋雨紅花生…).
\(^{152}\) 6.15b (poem, staying with the Wen of Wu-ch’i on an overcast night 雲夜宿武溪溫氏…).
\(^{153}\) 7.16b (poem, seeing people take \textit{Echinochloa crus-galli} as I passed below a mountain 過山
SCENIC LANDSCAPES

The literati of early Ming T’ai-ho also reflected upon the landscape of their native county in its wider, more inclusive, and more specifically scenic dimensions. Scenic appreciation was very much a social activity in which the younger cohorts of literati, many with good prospects for official careers, developed a sense of identity and comradeship. Scenic outings, literary descriptions, and artistic representations enhanced emotional identification with native place, which was useful psychic capital to have in the distant and uncertain world of imperial bureaucracy.

Wang Chih, Minister of Personnel in Peking from 1443 to 1457, was one of the highest imperial officials of his time. Home on leave in 1422, his star already on the rise, he described at great length an outing he took with some sixteen promising local literati up to the summits of Mt. Wu, west of the county seat. Struck by the grandeur of the view from one of these summits, he remarked:

... the rest of us climbed the Wu-po hill, then pushed ourselves to the top of a crag. Here there were no more big trees, just yellow grass and dwarf bamboo. The view was bright and clear in all directions. Right beneath our feet, and extending for several hundred li, as far as our eyes could see, there lay a scenic expanse of villages, bamboo groves and tree clumps, and smoke and clouds. The big mountains in the south part of the county loomed about like jade tablets. There was the Kan river, flowing in from the west, making its bend in front of the county seat, and then continuing on east, until the smaller mountains hid it and you couldn’t see it any more. Inside and outside the city walls you could make out the different government offices, people’s homes, and Buddhist and Taoist temples, even though they were packed as tight as the teeth of a comb, or the scales of a fish. I sighed and said to the others: ‘‘This truly is a magnificent county. If we hadn’t taken this trip, we would never have fully grasped its scenic scale.’’

There existed local landscape artists in T’ai-ho in the early Ming. Their work is now apparently all lost, but comments upon it by local literati remain. Nowhere did they say that this art had any value as art. Rather, they took it as a literal but necessarily second-hand likeness of its subject. Looking at a landscape painting was a


154 Wang Chih, A2.16a–23b (inscription on a trip to Wu-shan 遊武山記).
flimsier experience than viewing the actual landscape that it tried to portray. As Wang Chih put it, in a poem he placed on a painting of Hsiao Tz’u’s home in Nan-ch’i (township 59): “The artist Li has executed this painting with rare skill; yet how can looking at a painting be as good as observing the real thing?” Therefore landscape art was here a technique whereby an immovable, inaccessible scene was approximately represented on paper, and made portable, so as to provide those far from the native soil with something to stimulate sentimental attachments and nostalgic reverie. Hsiao Tz’u served in the Han-lin Academy in Peking; the painting of his Nan-ch’i home will simply have helped him reconstruct a fond and familiar scene in his mind.

But there were other and more important uses for T’ai-ho’s landscape art. For example, Wang Chih’s mother’s family, also surnamed Hsiao, lived in Lu-kang (“Fortune Hill,” township 55), some ten miles northwest of the county seat. The estate was “surrounded by a landscape (ching-wu) of clear creeks and scenic mountains.” Wang’s maternal uncle Hsiao K’o (1358–1411) selected the best views, which he called “The Eight Scenes at Fortune Hill,” and he devised these labels for them:

- Woodgatherer’s Cottage at Fortune Hill
- Gathering of Gulls at Snail Cove
- Fishing in a Snowfall at Cheng Island
- Farming beneath Clouds in Tung Ward
- Morning Colors on Gap Mountain
- Autumn Sounds on Mount Wu-lao
- Moonlight after Rain on Apricot Creek
- Clear Wind in Bamboo Pass

He used to sit and sing in these places. He always wanted to have a good lyricist write descriptive poems for them, but he died without having managed it. Fortunately, his son, Hsiao Fu-te, has been able to fulfill his wish. This year he brought his own paintings of the eight scenes to Peking, and Lung Shih-yü [Lung Wen, 1409–59] of the Central Drafting Office, helped him in arranging to have various officials here write poems about them. I was asked to provide the preface. . . .

These eight scenes have always been there in Lu-kang, but until the right people were found, they just languished unappreciated in their remoteness and obscurity. Now, thanks to Hsiao Fu-te and his father, the beauty of these places has been noted.

155 Ibid., poem on a painting of Han-lin Compiler Hsiao [Tz’u]’s thatched hall at Nan-ch’i 題蕭腸修南溪草堂圖, in CAFC 50.54ab.
made manifest, and that is surely Lu-kang’s good fortune, because, as the saying goes, it is people that make a place scenic, just as a man’s talent becomes apparent only when it is put to use.\(^\text{156}\)

Now, here a rural T’ai-ho estate has become something much more than a holding that affords a livelihood. It has been translated by art and poetry into the recognizable coin of the national esthetic tradition. The tiny, obscure locality of Lu-kang has won at least a momentary place on the national scenic map, and the Hsiao family has itself gained by its determined promotion of these scenes. Social approval among Peking officialdom will have injured neither their standing in local society, nor their hopes for official careers for themselves. In this way, T’ai-ho’s local landscapes could indeed be made to serve as social currency in the wider world beyond.

T’ai-ho’s scenic excellence could also be directed not away, but inward and downward, to the psychic benefit of a landlord, and in the interest of peaceful relations among the laborers on his detached estate. Wang Chih detailed it thus:

Twenty \(li\) (about 7 miles) south of T’ai-ho there is a place called Nan-yuan (South Garden), with luxuriant forests and broad fields. A range of mountains coming from Feng-ling in Lang-ch’uan [township 26] divides and encloses Nan-yuan to the east and west, about seven or eight \(li\) away. A small river, with its source in Hsing-kuo county, flows northwest to join the Kan, and as it comes through here, the water becomes very clear and attractive. Given so scenic a landscape, the inhabitants of this place are honest and simple, showing little sign of crime or strife. This is one reason why my friend, Hsiao Chung-ling, has his detached estate here.

As far as the eye can see, all the fine fields and deep ponds are owned by him, and he himself directs his slaves (\(t’ung-nu\)) in the plowing and planting. There is a sufficiency of anything you’d care to choose: rice, soybeans, wheat, vegetables, fish, turtles. Recently his son was appointed magistrate in T’eng county [in Kwangsi], so now there is also a salary income, and when guests come, Hsiao Chung-ling can relax, drink with them, and share the enjoyment of this place.

This enjoyment consists in everything that strikes the ear and eye. You look off to the mountains, shaded by dense growths of pine and cypress, and your eye follows the deer as they file up and down. You look out on the river, and there you watch the boats as they sail by, and observe the birds and fish as they swim. You hear the singing of the wood-collectors and fishermen; you see the traffic of the plowmen and herdsmen.

I was once going to Shan-t’ien [township 31] and passed through here en route. A slave pointed out the Hsiao detached estate and identified it for me. I would have

\(^{156}\) Wang Chih, B8.44a–45a (preface to poems on eight scenes at Lu-kang 禄岡八景詩序).
paid Hsiao Chung-ling a visit, but he was not home at the time. I did linger and look around awhile before I proceeded on.

There was a time when I was home on leave when I thought about setting up a farming estate for my retirement, but I never did it. There was good field and garden land available, but either it lacked a scenic river, without which the wise cannot be content; or else it lacked forested mountain, without which the benevolent are dissatisfied. There are very few places that, like Nan-yuan, have all of it. It is therefore appropriate that Hsiao should seek to preserve his enjoyment by asking me to write this account.

Yet the scenic dimensions of Nan-yuan do not end here. If you look even further off, then to the south you notice the high peaks of the San-ku (Three Gazers) side by side, rearing a thousand feet up into the clouds. The local teacher Hsiao Tzu-ching [Hsiao Ch’u, 1064–1130] once had a studio out there. Off to the east is Mt. Wang, immense and overpowering, like a racing dragon or recumbent tiger. That is where in the Chin era [265–419 A.D.] Wang Tzu-yao, the immortal, ascended into the sky. But just as the pure and lofty unworldliness of these places transcends the life and death of individuals, so too Hsiao Chung-ling, as he contemplates these distant reaches, must surely achieve a transcendent joy that lies beyond landscape and cannot be communicated to others. . . .

Unlike the series of disconnected scenes at Lu-kang, the Nan-yuan landscape is holistic and complete. The land-use zones succeed each other with distance; wild water and nemoral slopes enclose a secure subsistence base that delights the senses as much as it fills the larder. It was a “Confucian” landscape, in that its esthetics reinforced moral values and social harmony. But beyond the march in the near distance there lay a further and higher region, this one a Taoist landscape of awesome peaks and world-transcending promise, a distinct spiritual-geographical frontier. Below stretched the humanized landscape of subsistence routine and social obligation, while above flashed a wild, formless skyscape of transcendence, freedom and joy, the Taoist paradise of the upper atmosphere which the adepts of old had supposedly attained.

The elevated site of the Lung-ch’eng-ssu, a rebuilt Buddhist temple in township 8, conveyed a strong sense of otherworldliness to Liang Ch’ien, early in the fifteenth century:

Here the hills approach from several hundred li to the southwest, undulating like an uninterrupted chain of dragons. They make a forested ring around the temple, hence its name [“Dragon Wall”]. You can see the Kan river far off in one direction, and the San-ku peaks in another. You find yourself among steep cliffs with

\[157\] Ibid., B3.26a–27b (inscription for a detached estate at Nan-yuan 南園別墅記).
endless green and idle tinkling sounds. Atop the heights, you are among the mist-clad pines and cypress, so far from the everyday world that it is like being up among the sacred mountains T’ien-t’ai and Lu-shan.158

From the lowland home of a physician in Kuan-ch’ao (township 31), the view of the distant mountains at certain moments also conveyed a hint of paradise: ‘‘Whenever the rain stops and the mist evaporates, the play of light and shadow creates rich patterns so worldly that one is reminded of P’eng-hu and Yuan-ch’ao [mythical island abodes of the immortals].’’159

The relationship between these two realms, earthly and ethereal, was pointed up by Wang Chih, while living in Peking. He had had forty pictures made and mounted into a long scroll. Thirty-eight of the pictures made up a detailed panorama of all the ‘‘mountain and river’’ scenery of his native T’ai-ho county. ‘‘When off duty I look at this,’’ he wrote, ‘‘and it is like having the views I knew from long ago right before my eyes. My spirits rise and my heart relaxes. What is it but this painting that lets me enjoy these mountains and forests right here in Peking?’’

Two of the pictures portrayed not scenic landscape at all, but immortals, ‘‘floating in the void’’ and ‘‘journeying beyond the everyday world.’’ They did not constitute an incongruity. If landscape somehow lost its charm, then their purpose became clear. Wang Chih explained:

On second thought, it occurred to me that the landscape of my county was enjoyable when I saw it long ago, but I have long been away, and am unsure what changes may have taken place. It all depends on the quality of our magistrates. If we had had good ones, who gained the cooperation of the people and brought on Heaven’s bounty, then the flora and fauna will have flourished even more; the mountains will have become even finer and the waters clearer, and the pleasure of it all will have increased. But this is not what I hear. I fear that what I used to enjoy now looks lamentable, and that the local people must be envying the immortals on their transcendental journey.160

Whether in fact the landscape of T’ai-ho began notably to deteriorate in the mid-fifteenth century, owing to official malad-

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158 Liang Ch’ien, 4.42b–44a (inscription on the repair of the Lung-ch’eng-ssu 重修龍城寺記).
159 Ibid., 4.41a–42b (inscription for a physician’s retreat 杏林清隱記).
160 Wang Chih, A2.38b–40a (inscription for a group of paintings 畫苑記).
ministration, or to other causes, is uncertain. What soon did occur, however, was a definite end to earlier literati preoccupations with the beauty or grandeur of local landscape in the round. By the sixteenth century, there are signs that some major shifts in attitudes toward nature and landscape were taking place. The clues are several, and they trace an interesting trajectory.

The first clue centers about Kuo Hsu (1456–1532), the only T’ai-ho native who ever achieved anything close to national recognition as an artist. As an artist and literatus, one would expect him to have devoted some of the same loving attention to his native scenery as had the literati before him, who wrote, but did not paint. Yet that is not the case. Kuo Hsu developed his artistic ideas on his travels, and though he did live at home for periods of time, none of his work ever seems explicitly to have featured T’ai-ho scenes.\(^{161}\) That is surely strange. All intellectual and emotional contact with the earlier T’ai-ho tradition seems to have broken off. The county landscapes that, just two generations earlier, had inspired so much description and comment, somehow failed to make an impression upon Kuo Hsu.

This curious deflation of T’ai-ho’s scenic inheritance is nowhere explained, but it does help build a context for understanding the acceptance of certain new esthetic fashions from outside. An early example of this is the Tzu-i yuan (“Garden of Self-satisfaction”), laid out by Liu Che (1541–1611), a member of a very wealthy family of K’an-ch’i (“Pagoda Creek,” township 63). He is said to have planned it in imitation of a style developed in the city of Soochow, in the Yangtze delta region. This showpiece surrounded a library and a museum, and boasted plantings of “‘a myriad bamboo, a thousand rows of cypress, ancient Prunus mume (“Japanese apricot’”), gnarled pines, red-flowered peach, an osmanthus grove, tubsful of lotus, potsful of orchids, and noted flowers scattered about the courtyard.’’\(^{162}\) Again, it is a nice question why, given the already celebrated picturesqueness of the natural and manmade

\(^{161}\) Ch’en Ch’ang-ch’i, Lung-chin-yuan chi 龍津原集 (Ming woodblock ed.), 1.16b–20a (biography of Kuo Ch’ing-k’uang [Kuo Hsu] 郭清狂傳).

\(^{162}\) Lo Ta-hung, 10.26a–36a (epitaph); Tsou Yuan-piao 鄭元標 (1551–1624), epitaph, in Chiao Hung 焦竑 (1541–1620), ed., Kuo-ch’ao hsien-cheng lu 國朝獻徵録 (reprint Taipei, 1965), 114.98b–100b.
landscapes of T’ai-ho, it was now felt appropriate to indulge in an expensive, contrived, and inward-turned creation of this sort. (Rural insecurity may have been a factor.)

Excursions changed, too. In earlier times, the literati reached the mountains of T’ai-ho on horseback and scaled them on foot. In the 1660s, however, the literati hiked no more, but were taken as tourists by sedan-chair across the rice paddies and up Mt. Yü-hua, where rest pavilions awaited them, and where, after a lunch of boiled mallow and rice-beer, they would not explore or botanize, but unpack and examine books and paintings by a clear, cold stream. The large and small worlds of nature have been pushed here, from the center to the edges of consciousness.

Atop Mt. Wang stood an altar, erected in the early fourteenth century by Hsiao Te-t’ung of T’ao-yuan (township 12), of bricks manufactured at the base of the mountain by hired laborers, then hauled painfully to the top. There, sacrifices to Wang Tzu-yao and other ancient Taoist adepts proved effective against flood, drought, disease, and childlessness. In 1671, more than three hundred years later, that altar still stood, and was still regularly visited on foot by the common people. The literati, however, now enjoyed some wholly new facilities. A retired official from neighboring Lu-ling county (Chang Chen-sheng, also a noted Confucian writer) put a battalion of slaves (t’ung-p’u) to work hacking out of the rock and forest a scenic route to the top of Mt. Wang that chairbearers could negotiate. The stone-paved path bridged streams and skirted rocky deeps, and all along it were built pavilions, resthouses, and storied structures, each with its own name, easily some twenty in all. This development provided comfort and amusement for literati tourism. Once again, nature found itself modified and to a significant degree displaced by artifice.

No literatus of the early Ming ever wrote of the common landscape as Hsiao Shih-wei did in his diary for November 4, 1635: “Yang Chai-yun and I waited for K’ang Lin-ting at Pointed Star

164 Wang Chih, A1.6b–8a (inscription for the altar and brick building on Mt. Wang 王山仙壇磚室記).
165 Wang Yü-k’uo 王愈擴 (17th century), excerpted account, in CAFC 2.21a–22b.
Hill [to the west of the county seat]. This is a bald mountain, but it is higher than the surrounding hills and so affords something of a view. There is a stone cliff behind with a big split in it, the best scenic attraction here, but unfortunately it is spoiled by a detestable ramshackle house built right in the middle of it.\textsuperscript{166} If this house had been noticed at all in the early Ming, it would probably have been considered an appropriate component of the landscape, not a cause for offense as here.

An outstanding achievement among the new landscape fashions in T’ai-ho was the nationally celebrated Ch’un-fou yuan (‘‘Spring Floating Garden’’), planned and built by the same Hsiao Shih-wei in the 1620s, and located in the Willow Creek area of the western suburb, as was mentioned earlier in connection with the question of suburban development.

The Spring Floating Garden was a completely manmade scenic landscape. Hsiao had channels dug to make creeks, soil and rock piled up to make mountains, winding paths laid out, bridges and pavilions erected, and plantings put in. ‘‘In every instance,’’ we are told, ‘‘he exhausted all possibilities and exercised every cleverness to make this garden different from anyone else’s.’’\textsuperscript{167} Hsiao Shih-wei himself wrote a descriptive guide to the park. An excerpt from the middle of it may suffice to give its flavor:

At the end of the Path of Allurement, there is an island, from which the distant trees viewed by moonlight look like so much shepherd’s purse. On this island sits Bowl Mountain, half of which looks as though it were about to topple into the lake. The mountain looks like a bowl if you view it from the lake, but if you stand atop it, and look out on the lake, it is quite like being on a snail that is plowing its way through a dish of water. Looking down from there, you see fish swimming in the tips of the reflected branches of the trees, people walking as if in a mirror, and all the shadows of the trees following you along in mid-current.\textsuperscript{168}

Some complex illusions have been effected here. Mountains, islands, lakes, usually the distal components of a scenic landscape, and reachable only with difficulty, have been miniaturized and placed close to home, perhaps about where a kitchen garden might


\textsuperscript{167} Shih Jun-chang, 14.10a–11a (account of a tour of the Ch’un-fou garden 游春浮園偶記).

\textsuperscript{168} Hsiao Shih-wei, excerpted account, in CAFC, 5.19a–20a.
lie in a subsistence landscape. Moreover, this walk-through wilderness was intended to be appreciated less for itself than for its capacity to spring perceptual surprises on the viewer, to suggest imaginative permutations of one thing into something else. Distant trees look like weeds; a toy mountain becomes now a bowl, now a snail’s shell; fish seem to swim in trees. Although Hsiao Shih-wei had close personal connections to people whom Wakeman has styled the “Romantic” literati of seventeenth-century China, with their “esthetic sensuality,” “sybaritic laxity,” and egocentrism, the Spring Floating Garden seems rather to have tried to express a certain intellectuality. Perhaps it embodied in some way the combination of Buddhist epistemology and intellectual Taoism that Hsiao Shih-wei is said to have adopted in his now lost commentary on the Buddhist text known as the Awakening of Faith.170

The new-style gardens of T’ai-ho, affordable by only a very few wealthy men, take us far indeed from the land uses of the workaday world that the early Ming literati had celebrated. The identification of some of the plantings that graced these gardens underscores the point. Beside such traditional local stocks as camphor trees, bamboo, osmanthus, and magnolia, new and exotic species appear for the first time, most likely as special purchases. Both the Tzu-i and the Ch’un-fou gardens boasted specimens of the red-petaled, double-flowered peach (fei-t’ao), an ornamental rather than an economic plant, and almost assuredly an import.

Hsiao Shih-wei noted in his diary that, as of November 13, 1635, “the crabapple is all abloom, and there are a few blossoms open on the peaches and plums. The narcissus has put out some luxuriant and lovely bunches of flowers. Later I went over to the Pan-jo Buddhist temple to check on the chrysanthemums. The best variety is the ‘frost-defying yellow,’ but the variety called ‘gold sparrow tongue’ grown by my younger brother is almost as good.’” On December 2, he observed that the hydrangea (or viburnum), the

“human-faced peach,” and the quince had all flowered, and that the crabapple was still blooming despite the frost.\footnote{171}

The crabapple in question is specified by Hsiao as the *hsi-fu hai-t'ang*, a spectacular small tree, profusely adorned in season with rose-colored blossoms. H. L. Li identifies it as the *Malus floribunda*, perhaps a hybrid, and in any case a native of north China.\footnote{172} The so-called human-faced peach is not a peach, but the *Dracontomelum dao*, a tropical member of the cashew family (*Anacardaceae*), and in T'ai-ho, far to the north of its native range. The quince is specifically the *t'ieh-keng hai-t'ang* (*Chaenomeles lagenaria*), or “Japanese quince,” also cultivated for its floral display.

There is a certain consistency here, between the cultivation of these new and exotic ornamental plants, and the shift of esthetic interest from the natural or subsistence landscape to the manufactured miniature. It all seems to amount to a deliberate attempt to ignore anything local or commonplace. The Tzu-i and Ch’un-fou gardens combined national fashion and personal idiosyncrasy, and though those gardens happened to have been built in T’ai-ho, they had no special connection to it. They could have been put almost anywhere in south China.

As in the mid-fourteenth, so again in the mid-seventeenth century, T’ai-ho county suffered the depredations and upheavals of prolonged civil war (albeit with very different consequences for landscape appreciation). In 1662, a visitor, Shih Jun-chang, found the county “as warm with bandits, and thorny scrub growing in what once were people’s homes.” He further noted that “wherever you look, you see signs of abandonment. . . and you realize that before the upheavals, there must have been a dense and flourishing population of mountain people here.”\footnote{173} In 1677, T’ai-ho was described by a local writer, Liang Kung, as still lying in ruins—its schools wrecked, markets and shops closed, and agriculture out of production.\footnote{174}

The Spring Floating Garden was an early casualty of these times. By 1662, “woodgatherers and herdsmen had taken everything away,”

\footnote{171}{Hsiao Shih-wei, diary, in Teng Chin-shen, ed., pp. 146–47.}
\footnote{173}{Shih Jun-chang, poems section, 4.6a (passing T’ai-ho county 過泰和縣); 6.15b–16a (on the road from Chi-chou to T’ai-ho 自吉州之泰和道中).}
\footnote{174}{CAFC 20.35b–39b; 47.73a–74b.}
and all that remained was weeds and ruined walls and pavilions, such that "the onlooker would hardly guess now that all this was once a garden." No matter. The old garden had fronted on an artificial body of water called Lake T’ao, made up of several excavated and interconnected ponds. During the troubled 1660s and 70s, Hsiao Shih-wei’s nephew and heir (Hsiao Po-sheng, 1619-ca. 1678) created a new Buddhist temple complex and resort on a different side of this lake. The old garden had been in its day a resort where elite guests (including members of the Restoration Society) had been welcome to stay, and Hsiao Po-sheng continued to offer such hospitality. One famous and frequent guest of his, Fang I-chih, commented that since Lake T’ao was not wide and wild like a real lake, but calm and sheltered, it should be renamed "Winding Shore.”

This new resort comprised a Buddhist temple (called the "Sandalwood Incense Region of Wisdom"), a "Garden of the Buddhist Householder," and a structure called the "Tower of Great Compassion," which contained apartments for guests, as did a nearby Buddhist hermitage (called the I-an, or Shou-shan an). Hsiao Po-sheng’s personal showpiece garden, the Tun-p’u ("Garden of Escape"), with its lotus pond, seems to have been laid out in part of what had been the old Spring Floating Garden. The Garden of Escape featured a grove of fine sophora trees plus tea bushes and medicinal herbs; its gardeners were skilled in the making of tiny boats of orchids and toy sedan-chairs of bamboo, as well as in brewing tea, and in the distilling of a fiery vodka, a Hsiao family specialty. The extraordinary wealth of the Hsiao family, only slightly depleted by the wars, made possible all this construction; here in Willow Creek lay a small paradise of repose in a county where "all around lay ruined places and bald-topped hills.”

In June/July of 1670, Fang I-chih and the Buddhist abbot

175 Shih Jun-chang, 14.10a–11a (cf. n. 167).
176 Wang Yu-k’uo, account of the tour, in CAFC 3.13b–14a. Fang I-chih’s visits in T’ai-ho have been detailed in Yü Ying-shih 余英時, Fang I-chih wan-chieh k’ao 方以智晚節考 (Hong Kong: Hsin-ya yen-chiu-so ch’u-pan, 1972), and Jen Tao-pin 任道斌, Fang I-chih nien-p’u 方以智年譜 (Hofei: An-hui chiao-yü ch’u-pan-she, 1983).
177 Shih Jun-chang, poems section, 26.25b–26a (poems on Hsiao’s Ch’un-fou garden 蕭氏春浮園四首); 7.9b (the lotus pond in the Tun-p’u 避圃荷池); 18.21ab (song about the T’ai-ho vodka 泰酒歌); Wei Hsi, poem, in CAFC 51.1ab; Wang Shih-chen 王士禛 (1634–1711), remark about the Hsiao wealth, in CAFC 53.92b–93a.
Chung-ch’ien had a bamboo raft built and got together a small nighttime boating party on Lake T’ao. One of the participants was a local writer, Wang Yü-k’uo. His account of the party evidences a Buddhist reading of landscape, with a deliberate search for its ambiguities and double meanings:

We waited at Plum Mound, east of the Tower, for the moon to rise. A breeze blew in the fragrant lotus, and mist clung in the reflected elms. Soon there was light in the night clouds behind the trees, and the bright moon, round as a basket, rose above the west pagoda. We boarded the raft and rowed among the reflections of bamboo and cypress. The moon appeared and disappeared as the raft turned this way and that. The two slaves [t’ung] at the oars had never been on the lake before, and had to ask directions. After giving them directions, we got extraordinary views at every turn. The mountains beyond seemed to follow us in an aimless way; the most darkly foliaged one was Mt. Yü-hua.

Presently we heard a slight noise like a brook, coming from the tall trees. It turned out to be an old peasant working a well-sweep with his foot. He must have been very tired, and we laughed at our enjoying relaxation, while he enjoyed his labor. We were all simply following our inclinations.

We then caught glimpses of lamps burning in the Garden of the Buddhist Householder. The garden people had seen our raft coming, and had lit and placed the lamps on shore. We rowed to the temple and landed there. . . . The abbot P’ing-yuan served us tea and snacks, and we discussed the recent history of this place, and while we were regretting not having toured here in the earlier days, the water clock in the tower sounded three times.

We then left the Temple and anchored in the broadest and brightest part of the lake. The moon was directly overhead, the water reflected the sky perfectly, and we agreed that it was probably mistaken to consider the lake a miniature, and not a big and wide one after all. Then a breeze ruffled the trees, the night air turned chilly, and the abbot Chung-ch’ien pulled his robe around his head. We ordered the two slaves to row back at once, but they got lost among the islands and couldn’t find the way.

The lake used to serve as a place for the Buddhist ceremony of releasing living things, so the fish here were tame. But the birds on shore rose in alarm and twittered among the trees when they heard us talking. That touched us, and it showed we hadn’t yet completely tired of the excursion.

The lake is only about one li from the city wall, so close that we could hear very sharply the sound of something being split. We sighed that although we often want to take some rice-beer and boat about on a body of water under a full moon, armed troops on shore will investigate anything unusual and yell at you if you try. That did not happen to us this time, because the lake is hidden among trees, so we enjoyed ourselves just as we pleased. . . .

Thus while menials rowed them over the moonlit artificial lake, the literati read the darkened landscape as though it constituted a demonstration lesson in the phenomenology of the *Awakening of Faith*. Opposites blurred and erased each other. Each new and random ideation that affected the party posed some new contradiction that flashed for a moment, then synthesized itself. Work merged with leisure, and the small blended with the big. The past entangled itself in the moving time of the present, the tame intergraded with the wild, and even military repression enveloped freedom.

Another famous visitor, the Ming loyalist Wei Hsi, described a boating excursion on Ch’ing-ch’i (‘Clear Creek’), just east of the city, in June 1677. He liked the daytime view here, but regretted the absence of ‘‘a pavilion or tower to take it all in from.’’ It was not he, but Hsiao Po-sheng, who arranged that the outing be conducted not in the daylight, but by night, under the moon, and on the crest of a chance flood. As the members of the party contemplated their reflections in the calm, moonlit floodwater, their real-life anxieties happily dissolved into oblivion. The experience created a joyful frame of mind that they all believed merited permanent remembrance after the party was over. ‘‘It is the inclinations we have in everyday life that create joy,’’ remarked Hsiao Po-sheng. ‘‘If we can achieve this joy in ourselves, then no matter where we go, we will be in a waterscape [like this one].’’

And so ends the late Ming trajectory of increasingly attenuated forms of local landscape appreciation. From the early Ming discovery of beauty and value in the real world of nature and life on the land, one ends in the late Ming and early Ch’ing determination to ignore or avoid that world, with the creation of toy fantasies in artificial lakes and landscaped gardens, and a preference for moonlit surrealisms to the daylight world of settlement, work, and subsistence. As one ponders this cycle of landscape interpretation by the T’ai-ho literati, and all the things it might mean, it is hard to dismiss the suspicion that in T’ai-ho these changing perceptions were to some appreciable degree driven by changing social opportunity and social consciousness—that from the sixteenth century an optimistic world of local security and decent opportunity for the

179 Wei Hsi, account, in *CAFC* 3.11b–12a.
literati gradually soured; that a more limited, more problematical, and more distasteful world replaced it; and that changing perceptions of landscape perhaps served as a sort of barometer for the changing pressures of society.