

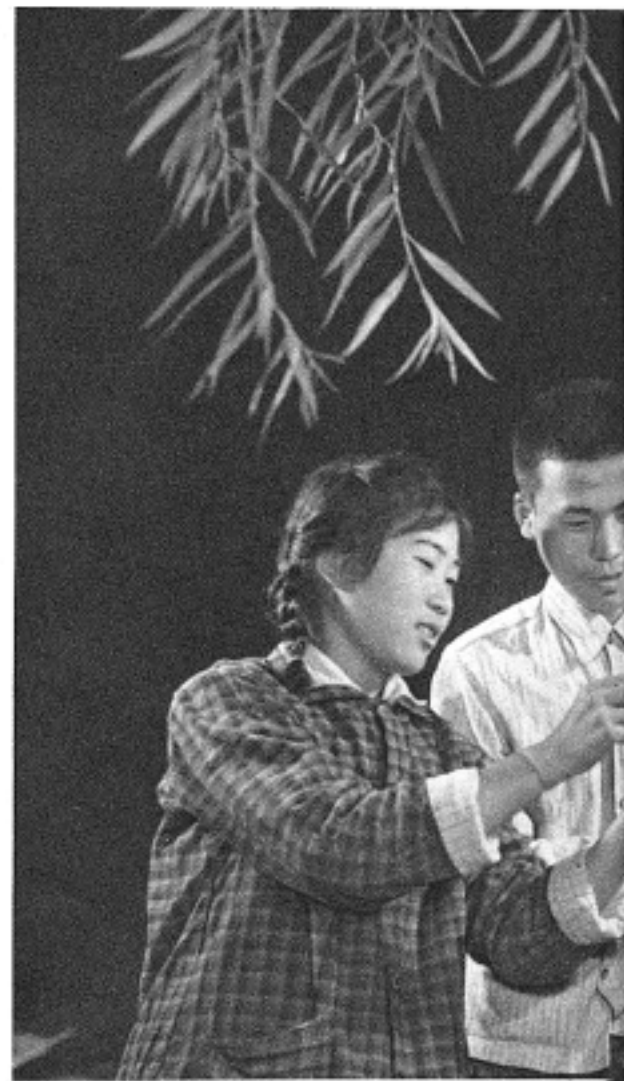


Chia La-hsiang, speaking at a national forum on cotton growing.

Cotton sprouts cultivated in beds.



Inspecting insect pest control at night.



A Women's Cotton-Growing Group

Article by Wang Tien-yu
Photographs by Wang Tien-yu, Fan Teh-yuan and Teng Cheng-pin

At a national forum on cotton growing, a young woman vividly described how her group, consisting of 26 women commune members, picked 162.8 kilos of ginned cotton per *mu* over 52 *mu*. Her account won high appreciation from model cotton growers and experts from various places who were attending the meeting. She is Chia La-hsiang, leader of the cotton-growing group of the Changchiachuang Production Brigade, Tali County, Shensi Province.

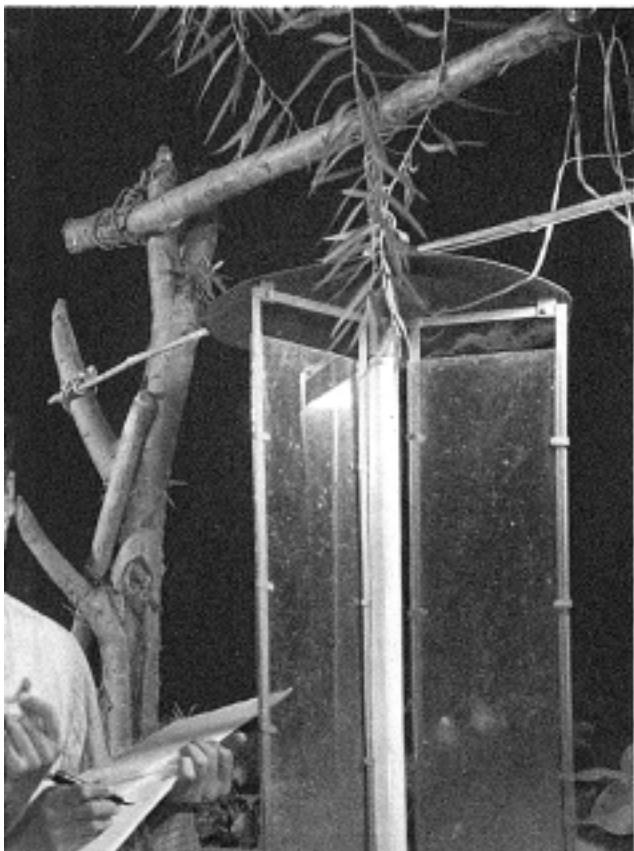
The cotton-growing group was formed in 1972 with Chia as the head. The first thing they did was to transform some 20 *mu* of alkaline wasteland along a river bank, sandy and overgrown with grass. Braving severe cold in the rigours of winter, they ploughed deep, brought in good soil and checked the rise of alkalinity. Within ten days, they turned the waste into level cropland.

In the past three years, they ploughed five times the 50 *mu* of their cotton fields from 26 to 50 centimetres, each time deeper than the previous one.

In the past cotton had never been planted in Changchiachuang. Since the women were inexperienced, they went to learn from



Chia La-hsiang and her husband Kao Tsan examining cotton seeds in the brigade scientific research station.



other brigades which had succeeded in achieving high yield by transplanting young sprouts. They tried out what they learned on a small plot. Output of ginned cotton reached 90 kilos per *mu*.

The following year they decided to apply the method to all of their fields. Some people were worried and said, "To raise sprouts and transplant them over a large area takes a lot of labour power. If something goes wrong, the season will slip by and output will drop." This only served to remind them to make good preparations.

They selected fine seeds and carefully placed them in the beds. They attended the beds day and night — checking the temperature and humidity. When transplanting they examined one by one the several hundred thousand young plants, putting aside those which were damaged, weak, or which had loose soil around the roots.

Racing against the season, they got up

early and knocked off late. A heavy rain suddenly struck. They only worked faster. After a few weeks, they finished cultivating and transplanting ahead of time. Sturdy young plants covered their 50 *mu* of cotton fields.

One day at dusk in July, dark clouds gathered overhead. In a twinkling, the wind was whirling and rain drops mixed with hail stones came pelting down. Most of the cotton leaves were torn to pieces and many stalks were broken.

A few persons tried to throw cold water on their efforts. "Cotton plants bear less bolls in a leap year. This is a leap year, so you cannot count on a good harvest." In answer, Chia and her colleagues vehemently criticized Confucius' "Everything is decided by Heaven". As soon as the storm stopped, they rushed to the field, wash basins and dippers in hand. They cleaned out the field, straightened up the plants, washed the mud



Group members summing up experience.



Chia La-hsiang and Chang Chiu-hsiang (2nd right), a model cotton grower, often exchange visits.

from their leaves and spread chemical fertilizer. A few days later, new leaves sprouted again.

Over the past three years, they have worked hard and raised cotton output steadily.

How have they achieved this success?

In February 1973, at a group meeting, the brigade Party secretary who had just returned from a visit to Tachai, told them what he saw there. He said that to supply the state with more cotton the former poor and lower-middle peasants of Tachai sweated all year round and obtained high yields of cotton even on hilly plots. Moved by this spirit, the women members pledged to follow their example. They have erected a wooden board at the edge of the cotton field with the inscription painted in red:

Raise cotton output continuously, wage revolution for ever;

Farm in a scientific way, make more contributions to the revolution.



Model cotton growers and experts visit Chia's group to see how the plants are doing in their field.



Spraying insecticide.

Brigade members of Changchiachuang delivering their harvest to the state.

