

New Mulberry Tree Orchards



Wang Ju-ying is an advanced worker of the farm. Silkworms under her care produce a large yield of high quality cocoons



Transplanting seedlings in the rice fields of the reclamation farm

Photographs by Sha Jen-Wen

IN east and southwest China, there are many well-known centres of silk and brocade production such as Nanking (Kiangsu), Hangchow (Chekiang) and Chengtu (Szechuan). Kiangsi Province with its warm climate is also a suitable place for sericulture. However, in old China, because of the bankruptcy of the rural economy and the unproductive red soil, which the peasants were not accustomed to planting to mulberry trees, sericulture in Kiangsi remained undeveloped.

In 1957, a group of government cadres and demobilized army men, responding to the Party's call to build up the mountain areas and the countryside, went to a hilly red soil terrain over 30 kilometres north of Nanchang, capital of the province, to set up a reclamation farm for developing sericulture. In the first year, they opened up a vast stretch of wasteland and the next year, transplanted mulberry trees and tree saplings, raised silkworms and produced silk fabrics and brocade on handcraft looms.

Today, after eight years, this former wasteland (20 kilometres in circumference) is covered with orchards of mulberry trees. Most of the cadres and demobilized army men who understood nothing about how to cultivate the trees have mastered the skill in the course of productive labour. They developed the method of cultivating green-manure crops between lines of trees on large mulberry plantations, providing experience for promoting sericulture on barren red-soil hills. In the past few years, the reclamation farm has supplied the nearby people's communes with good breeds of silkworms and fine strains of mulberry saplings, and trained technical personnel for them. The many skilled workers and large quantities of equipment dispatched by the state were of great help to the farm in expanding silk production. The silk mill formerly equipped with handcraft machines has now become a medium-sized industrial complex which can produce 10,000 metres of silk fabrics and brocade a day.

In order to lessen the burden of the state, the farm has gone in for the cultivation of rice and other crops as well as side-occupations, so that it is now self-sufficient in grain, cooking-oil, meat and vegetables.



The expanded silk brocade factory

A new grove of mulberry trees of the State Kiangsi Comprehensive Reclamation Farm for Sericulture

Another good harvest of silkworm cocoons this year

