State-Peasant Relations in 20th-Century China

by

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ABSTRACT

This study is a socio-economic and political analysis of peasant-state relations in 20th Century China. Peasants as families, as communities, and as a socio-political stratum have been greatly affected by the relative strength of the central state which at different times has ranged from near disintegration to almost complete, centralized control of society. Employing a historical approach, I have examined the changes undergone by both the national and the local state, and I have considered what bearing these changes have had on the world of the Chinese peasant. Reaction to the reach of the central state has been at two levels, that of the local cadre and that of the peasant. These two entities have at times operated in concert and at others in conflict with one another. As China is a vast country with regions marked by great physical and social differentiation, this study uses a comparative approach and concentrates on the North China Plain and the Pearl River Delta as two areas of study. The findings suggest that although regional differentiation should not be dismissed, the differences in peasant-state relations are not only between macro-regions such as the North and the South, but are apparent also within regions.

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Acknowledgments

My interest in China began ten years ago when I first had the opportunity to visit the People's Republic of China. This vast country, teeming with diverse and fascinating people had been out of my realm of experience and I came home determined to learn more about it. During that first trip I travelled to three different regions and saw both urban and rural areas. Although the cities were impressive, busy centers it was the countryside that stayed in my memory. I recall being struck not only by the beauty of the countryside but also by the industriousness of the peasant farmers. The physical austerity of much of the land only added to my respect for the rural inhabitants who farmed it.

I have spent the last two and a half years learning about the life of a Chinese peasant farmer and the relationship such a person has with the Chinese state. Complexities abound and every corner I turned has led to unexpected results. As with most first impressions, mine were naive and simple. And yet as my knowledge increased my respect and admiration for the peasants of China has grown and intensified and my interest has never waned. Much of my continued enthusiasm is owed to the tremendous help given me by my committee members, Dr. Ralph Huenemann and Dr. Gregory Blue. Without the many hours of arguing, debating and stimulating conversation I should never have accomplished the task I had set myself. During the course of my research I was given the most generous assistance by Dr. Harry Hsiao, who tirelessly corrected all my translations. My most sincere thanks must be given to my Supervisor, Dr. Yuen-fong Woon, who gave me the initial encouragement to take up graduate studies and continued to be my mentor, critic and friend. Finally I wish to thank my family for their patience during the past two years in putting up with a wife and mother whose body came home each day from school but whose spirit was roaming the Chinese countryside.

Chapter One - Introduction

China has undergone many drastic changes in the twentieth century. Dynastic society came to an end in 1911 with the fall of the Qing and for a brief period China degenerated into warlordism. Between 1927 and 1937 the Nationalist Party succeeded in establishing control in coastal and south China except in the outer, more remote parts of the country, where regional warlords held power and the Chinese Communist Party set up its headquarters. During the late 1930s through to the end of the second World War, Japanese forces occupied major parts of China. When war ended the Nationalists briefly regained power overall but in 1946 civil war broke out between Nationalist and Communist forces, and in 1949 the Chinese Communist Revolution ousted the Nationalist government and replaced it with Mao Zedong's Communist regime. The Mao years which continued until 1976 saw the ushering in of collectivization. Two years after the death of Mao, Deng Xiaoping took over leadership and set China on the path to economic reforms. In all this turbulent century, what has remained constant is that China has consistently remained, and still is, a predominantly peasant society. I am interested in studying how the state in its various guises, from Confucian, to Warlord, to Nationalist, to Maoist, and lastly to post-Maoist, has tried to enforce the compliance of peasant society to its demands and how the peasants have reacted to such attempts by the state. In order to proceed with such an analysis, an explanation of peasant society must be attempted first.

Definitions of Peasant Society

To define the Chinese peasant is to define "... a way of life", wrote Fei Xiaotong in 1936,[1] providing a holistic anthropological way of looking at the peasantry. However,

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[1] Fei Xiaotong, "Peasantry and Gentry: An Interpretation of Chinese Social Structure and its Change." In Bendix, Reinhard and Seymour Martin Lipset (eds.), *Class, Status and Power A Reader In Social Stratification* (New York: The Free Press, 1953), pp. 630-633.

other social scientists have tended to look at "peasants" from three different perspectives: as members of an economic household based on agriculture, as members of a cohesive rural community, or as members of a sociopolitical stratum. In this subsection I turn to various definitions of "peasant" which I find pertinent to the study of 20th century China.

The Russian theorist A.V. Chayanov, writing during the 1920s, defined the term "peasant" by making a distinction between a peasant and a farm manager. According to Chayanov a "farm manager" is an entrepreneur who farms according to market demands. By contrast, a "peasant" aims at self-sufficiency working in the fields primarily to meet the needs of family members and selling only what is surplus to those needs. Peasant production is thus determined for Chayanov not by market forces but by subsistence needs. Furthermore, labour is provided by the peasant family members with little or no hiring of wage labour. In Chayanov's opinion, as family labour cannot be easily separated into unit costs, and the annual production cannot be easily separated into units of income, capitalist profit accounting cannot be applied to a peasant family. Instead, peasants should be viewed as subsistence cultivators who may have some relation to commercialized society.[2]

Alfred Kroeber, a prominent American social anthropologist who wrote not long after Chayanov, described peasantries as 'part societies with part cultures,'[3] meaning that peasants are part of larger societies but retain cultural identities which set them apart. Expounding on this theme, Kroeber wrote that peasants are "definitely rural - yet live in relation to market towns; they form a class segment of a larger population which usually

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[2] A.V. Chayanov, *Organizatsiy krest'yanskogo khozyaistva*, (Moscow, 1925). Translated as "On the Theory of Noncapitalist Economic Systems." In D. Thorner, R.E.F. Smith, and B. Kerbley (eds.)*The Theory of Peasant Economy* (Homewood, Ill.: Richard D. Irwin Inc., 1966), pp. xiii-xv, 70-89.

[3] Alfred Kroeber, *Anthropology Race Language Culture Psychology Prehistory* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company Inc., 1948), p. 248.

contains also urban centers... They lack the isolation, the political autonomy, and the self-sufficiency of tribal populations; but their local units retain much of their own identity, integration, and attachment to soil and cults."[4] Thus, according to Kroeber, peasants as a social group not only lie somewhere between the primitive and the industrial segments of a culture but they interact with the larger social systems of which they are part. Robert Redfield, in elaborating on Kroeber's theory of 'a part society, with part culture,' likewise concluded that the peasant "points to a human type" which "required the city to bring it into existence. There were no peasants before the first cities."[5] According to Redfield peasants belong to a larger society outside their own communities, one which is controlled by an urban elite. It is this larger community or, "Greater Tradition"[6] that peasants emulate and try to replicate in their local communities.

Eric Wolf is a more recent social theorist of the peasantry, who maintained that, though cultivators may have formed isolated communities in the distant past, peasants are now always part of a larger economic system.[7] This means that contemporary peasant societies participate in exchange with a larger system, and that peasant production is exposed in some degree to market forces. For Wolf however it is "not the city but the state which is the decisive criterion of civilization and it is the appearance of the state which marks the threshold of transition between food cultivators in general and peasants."[8]

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[4] Kroeber, *Anthropology Race Language Culture Psychology Prehistory* , p. 248.

[5] Robert Redfield, *The Primitive World and Its Transformations* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1953),. p. 31.

[6] Robert Redfield, "The Social Organization of Tradition." In Jack M. Potter, May N. Diaz, and George M. Foster (eds.) *Peasant Society. A Reader* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1967), pp. 25-34.

[7] Eric Wolf, *Peasants* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc, 1966), p.8.

[8] *Ibid.* p. 11.

Most important, Wolf stresses that the type of relationship between the state and peasant society is one of power and subordination. Unlike primitive societies where producers controlled the means of production, modern peasant cultivators are at the mercy of a dominant ruling group (the state) and their surplus production is transferred to that group. Therefore, Wolf maintains "... it is only when the cultivator is integrated into a society with a state - that is, when the cultivator becomes subject to the demands and sanctions of power-holders outside his social stratum - that we can appropriately speak of peasantry."[9]

Wolf is not alone in theorizing that the peasants' subordinate relationship to a controlling group of outsiders is a central component of their definition. Teodor Shanin also stresses the exploited position of the peasant in relation to the larger community. According to Shanin, political, social and economic exploitation are all part of the structural subordination which identifies the peasant.[10] Shanin however departs from Redfield and Wolf and aligns his arguments with those of Chayanov by emphasizing that the modern peasant is a member of a society that economically is highly self-sufficient. While accepting a Marxist position that the peasantry is a group positioned at the bottom of the social and political order, dominated on the whole by others, Shanin maintains that it is the ability to remain self-sufficient through family farming that gives the peasantry its true identity.[11] Family farming, according to Shanin, involves the use of land, as "a necessary and generally sufficient condition of the occupation."[12] The right to land may take the forms of land-holding defined by custom and communal interaction or of state-formalized

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9 Wolf, *Peasants*, p. 11.

10 Teodor Shanin, "Peasantry as a Political Factor." In Teodor Shanin (ed.), *Peasant and Peasant Societies Selected Readings* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1971), p. 15.

11 *Ibid.* pp. 240-242.

12 Drawing on B. Galeski, *Chlopi i zawod rolnika*, (1963); cited in Teodor Shanin, *Defining Peasants. Essays concerning Rural Societies, Expolary Economies, and Learning from them in the Contemporary World* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1990), p. 24.

legal ownership. Legal ownership may reside with the peasant, the commune, the landlord or the state with land correspondingly being a private plot, a communal property, or a leaseholding. However the family farm is, according to Shanin, the basic unit of peasant ownership, production, consumption and social life. Beyond the family farm is the village in which the peasantry reaches its highest potential for autonomy and social self-sufficiency.[13]

The work of Kroeber, Redfield, Wolf and Shanin can be placed, broadly speaking, in a school of thought defined by the outlook, philosophy, and experience of western researchers of the early post-war decades. These researchers used a common approach which placed peasant society in the context of a larger community which was assumed to be more developed and sophisticated than that of the peasant whose aim was self-sufficiency driven by a subsistence ethic. In the 1960s Theodore Schultz departed from this school of thought and argued in his now-classic study, *Transforming Traditional Agriculture,* that peasant economic behaviour is both enterprising and highly efficient and that, if left to their own devices, peasant cultivators would use resources in the most efficacious way.[14] Schultz's work was influential among a new group of scholars who treated peasant society as discrete entities without the context of society in general. James Scott is an example of one of the new group of scholars who, in reaction to Schultz's work, argued in *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* that peasant economic behaviour is guided by a subsistence ethic which applies the principles of "risk avoidance" and "safety first." According to Scott those principles are institutionalized in various forms: patron-client reciprocity; peasant reciprocity and work-sharing among villagers to ensure a basic level of subsistence; the

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[13] Shanin, "Peasantry as a Political Factor." pp. 25-27.

[14] Theodore Schultz, *Transforming Traditional Agriculture* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1964).

redistribution of communal lands among peasant families; and intra-village taxes which favours the poor.[15] However in *The Rational Peasant* , an extensive critique of Scott's moral economy theory, Samuel Popkin argued that peasants are motivated primarily by considerations of self or family welfare rather than group interests or moral values. Elaborating on Schultz's position, Popkin contended that peasants act in self-interest to maximize gains by rationalizing production and balancing short- and long-term interest, in the same ways that a capitalist firm or investor does.[16]

The ongoing debate between the "formalists" such as Schultz and Popkins and the "substantivists" like Scott may be taken as illustrating Sidney Mintz's argument that "peasantry" should be analyzed as an ideal-type rather than as a empirical category because within the peasant community much differentiation occurs. To assume that peasants can be viewed as a homogeneous group or "part society" whose identity is determined by its asymmetrical relationships to external power ignores the internal differentiation that typifies peasant society. In a peasant community there are peasants more socially and economically powerful than others; a peasant may be not only a prey but a predator too.[17] Mintz stresses that the internal differentiation within a peasant community together with its existence among other rural peoples complicates the problem of definition.[18] While structural subordination of the peasantry to external forces constitutes one important characteristic of this group, peasants also live and function in conjunction with other rural

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[15] James Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 43.

[16] Samuel Popkin, *The Rational Peasant: The Political Economy of Rural Society in Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), p. 31.

[17] Mintz, Sidney, "A note on the definition of peasantries." *Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 3. (1974), p. 93.

[18] *Ibid.* p. 94.

groups.

Acknowledging Mintz's argument concerning peasant society homogeneity, one is also aware of the complication which arises from describing any peasant society as static or unchanging.[19] Compared with their urban counterparts, peasant societies do give the appearance of changing relatively slowly, if at all. This perception however runs counter to the observation that peasant society also interacts with a larger community. Undergoing a continuous process of adaptation to the changing world, peasant society is a historically variable entity. This is not to suggest that peasants should necessarily be thought as in a temporary state of transition from relatively dispersed, isolated, and self-sufficient communities to fully integrated market economies.[20] However what the theoretical literature suggests is that peasants are a distinct social group which should be considered within the structure of the larger world. This implies that the term "Chinese peasant" cannot be fruitfully taken as a timeless, autonomous essence but should rather be studied as a historically distinct but fluid stratum.

Three Models of the Chinese Peasantry:

In the field of Chinese studies various models and approaches have been developed to give an analytical framework to the lives of peasants. In this sub-section I turn to the work of three scholars who have taken a China-centered approach and constructed models of social organization which have particular application to Chinese peasants: Maurice

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[19] George M. Foster, "Introduction: What is a Peasant?" In Jack M. Potter, May N. Diaz, and George M. Foster (eds.), *Peasant Society, A Reader* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1967), p. 12.

[20] See Robert Redfield, *Tepoztlan: A Mexican Village. A Study of Folk Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930), p. 217. Casagrande, Joseph, "Some Observations on the Study of Intermediate Societies." In Verne F. Ray (ed.), *Intermediate Societies, Social Mobility, and Communication.* Proceedings of the 1959 Annual Spring Meeting of American Ethnological Society. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1959), p. 2.

Freedman's "lineage paradigm", G. William Skinner's "regional systems analysis", and Victor Nee's theory of "peasant household individualism" .

Maurice Freedman, a social anthropologist writing in the 1950s and 1960s, sought to identify the dominant institution of social life in rural China. Freedman took the position that the ideology of patrilineal descent takes precedence in China over all other principles of social organization. Following the work of British anthropologists Evans-Pritchard[21] and Fortes[22] who conducted field work in Africa regarding segmentary lineage societies, Freedman regarded the lineage as distinct from that of the clan as a corporate group holding defined rights. Freedman argued that village society should be examined at three levels. The first level is the local lineage which is 'a corporate group of agnates living in one settlement or a cluster of settlements'[23] and which allies with other local lineages to form a 'higher-order lineage.' The higher-order lineage is defined by Freedman as a nucleated community of agnates tracing unilineal descent from a founding ancestor, tied by substantial ancestral estates and expressing solidarity through periodic rituals at ancestral graves and ornate ancestral halls.[24] The clan lies beyond the higher-order lineages and consists of lineages that are genealogically tied together but are not members of an enduring group with common interests and activities.[25]

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[21] E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940).

[22] Meyer Fortes, *The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1945).

[23] Maurice Freedman, *Lineage Organization in Southeastern China.* (London: The Athlone Press, 1958).

[24] *Ibid.*

[25] Maurice Freedman, *Chinese Lineage and Society: Fukien and Kwangtung* (London: The Athlone Press, 1966), pp. 21-2.

What keeps a higher-order lineage, according to Freedman, is the holding of corporate property. It is the wealth of the lineage which gives its members not only the incentive to belong but also the ability to act as unofficial leaders in their communities. Why some regions such as southeastern China had extensive lineage development, while other areas, such as north China, did not was also predicated on lineage property trusts. Freedman concluded that the development of lineages in south China was due to several factors. Two of the most important were a frontier environment needing defense and a river delta requiring large-scale irrigation and rice cultivation, which permitted a substantial accumulation of wealth.[26]

At the same time Freedman was expounding the "lineage paradigm" G. William Skinner, an economic anthropologist, was developing a "regional systems analysis" to explain the larger world beyond the Chinese village.[27] Skinner argued that it was the 'standard market town' and not the village which formed the basis for a rural marketing system, providing as it did "all the normal trade needs of the peasant household: what the household produced but did not consume was normally sold there, and what it consumed but did not produce was normally bought there." [28] The typical standard market town was the central place for a marketing area which encompassed approximately 18 villages or 1500 households. Whereas Freedman theorized that it was the lineage which defined the immediate world of the peasant, Skinner argued that the 'standard marketing area' provided the broader local context. Here each peasant had "a nodding acquaintance with

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[26] *Ibid.*

[27] Other works by G. William Skinner discussed in further chapters include "Chinese Peasants and the Closed Community: An Open and Shut Case." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* Vol. 13, No. 3 (1971), pp. 270-81.

[28] G. William Skinner, "Marketing and Social Structure in Rural China, Part 1." *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXIV, No. 1, (November, 1964), pp. 3-43.

every adult in all parts of the marketing system"[29] and this community provided its members with economic structures and also social parameters. Annual fairs, religious societies, secret society lodges, matchmakers, and various dialects were part and parcel of the standard marketing area.

Beyond the local marketing system was an eight-tiered hierarchy of "central places" ranging from the standard marketing town, intermediate market town, central market town, local city, greater city, regional city, regional metropolis, to the central metropolis.[30] Each level was defined by economic features including its position in transportation networks, the timing of market schedules, the level of financial and postal service available, and the range of goods available at its markets that were unavailable in lower level markets.[31] Skinner maintained that beyond the standard market community there was not a single integrated national system but rather nine regional systems or "macro regions", each only tenuously linked to its neighbours. What distinguished one region from another was geography[32] and technological development, particularly transport technology.[33]

Victor Nee, writing during the mid-1980s, departed from both Freedman and

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[29] *Ibid.* pp. 40-41.

[30] G. William Skinner, "Cities and the hierarchy of local systems." In G. William Skinner (ed.) *The city in late imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977), p. 286.

[31] *Ibid.* pp. 347-51.

[32] The term "geography" is used in the broadest sense and includes physical features, resourse endowment, and distance. See Paul Cohen *Discovering History In China. American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), pp. 164-66.

[33] Skinner's macroregional study is only briefly mentioned as it does not directly pertain to this thesis. For a detailed analysis see Cohen. *Discovering History In China* pp. 164-166. Daniel Little *Underestanding Peasant China. Case Studies in the Philosophy of Social Science* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 79-85. Helen Siu *Agents and Victims in South China. Accomplices In Rural Revolution* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 295-96.

Skinner and argued that it was the nuclear family which formed the basic unit of organization in the world of the peasant, hence the term "peasant household individualism".[34] According to Nee Chinese peasants are more likely to favour family goals over individual and community ones. Following Popkins' theory of the 'rational' peasant, Nee depicts Chinese peasant households as 'rational' and thus responsive to incentives, willing to take risks, understanding of investment logic and in pursuit of maximized gains. As a result, according to Nee, Chinese peasants prefer to farm as individual household units rather than under collective organizations. Nee's theory, together with those of Freedman and Skinner are integrated into my thesis and form part of the analytical framework with which I have approached Chinese peasant society. As this thesis deals with peasant society and state relations I turn to an examination of "state" definitions.

The State:

The state can be examined in various ways, including in terms of its alleged origins and its claims to legitimacy, such as the Divine Rights of Kings, the Mandate of Heaven, a social contract, general will, or social class interests.[35] For my thesis, however, I shall confine my analysis to the state as an institution and examine its structure and functions and its relationship with society.

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[34] This analysis of Nee's theory of "peasant household individualism" is only a cursory outline as it is discussed in greater detail in chapter four.

[35] To pursue this line of analysis see Aristotle, "Social Classes: A Classical View." Reinhard Bendix and Seymour Martin Lipset (eds.) *Class, Status and Power* (New York: The Free Press, 1960). David P. Gauthier, *The Logic of Leviathan The Moral and Political Theory of Thomas Hobbes* (London: Clarendon Press, 1969). Peter Laslett, *Two Treatises of Government By John Locke A Critical Edition with An Introduction and Apparatus Criticus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960). Jean Jacques Rouseau *The Social Contract* (London: Dent, 1762). Karl Marx and Frederick Engels *The Communist Manifesto* (London: International Publishers, 1948). Frederick Engels, *The Origins of the Family, Private Property & The State, in Light of the Researches of Lewis H. Morgan* (London: International Publishers, 1942).

According to Charles Tilly, the state is an organization with the following features:

> (a) it controls the principal organized means of coercion in some territory, (b) the territory is large and contiguous, (c) the organization is differentiated from other organizations operating in the same territory, (d) it is autonomous, (e) it is centralized, (f) and its divisions are formally coordinated with one another.[36]

I shall focus on points (a) and (f) on Tilly's list, which I regard as indisputable features.

The first feature of the state, that of the monopoly on legitimate coercion, is also convincingly argued by many classic political theorists. Max Weber's thesis was that "... the state is an association that claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of violence, and cannot be defined in any other manner."[37] To both Tilly and Weber, as well as other political scientists, the state is an organization which represents the interests of a collective body of people wishing to give orderly structure to society.[38] It ultimately imposes its order upon society through the use of power. The actual use of violence depends upon circumstance. In some states, the threat of violence is sufficient as unofficial recognition of what would happen if compliance were not forthcoming. In others, there may be daily active reminders of coercive persuasion. That the use of violence is not condoned in society for all citizens but is a legitimate tool of the state helps raise the state ideologically

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[36] Tilly, Charles, *As Sociology Meets History* (New York: Academic Press, 1981), pp. 44-45.

[37] Max Weber, "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions". In H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, (eds.) *Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,1958), p. 334.

[38] Gianfranco Poggi, *The State Its Nature, Development and Prospects* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 19.

above society, giving it a position of dominance and grandeur that helps perpetuate it.

The second universal feature of the state on which I want to focus is its function of central coordination and arbitration. Though imperial China is often taken as an ideal-type of traditional bureaucratic state this function of coordination is all the more important in the modern period in which diversification and specialization results in a complex division of labour. Weber and Tilly both regard a multi-layered bureaucracy as a possible form of coordination and arbitration. Through a hierarchical structure of departments, organs and offices, a bureaucracy can be used as a means of controlling autonomous tendencies, and implementing decisions made by the holders of legitimate power. In a large and populous country, the central state is able to use a bureaucracy to delegate some of its functions to the local level creating a simultaneous existence of a central as well as a local bureaucracy, with varying degrees of coordination between the two bodies.

Using these two features of the state described by Weber and Tilly, one can place the state along two continuums of political control. Along the first continuum, the state varies according to its degree of control over the populace. It ranges from a totalitarian, pro-active state which frequently uses overt or covert means of violence to exert strict control over the populace, to a pluralistic, laissez-faire state which leaves the populace a high degree of freedom.[39] Along the second continuum, the state varies according to the degree of coordination between the central bureaucracy (or central state) and the local agents of the bureaucracy (or the local state). Measured along this yardstick, the state ranges from a centralized state which strictly controls every reach of the country to a totally decentralized state allowing a high degree of local autonomy, or even anarchic tendencies.

Needless to say, the above schema are merely abstract constructs. In reality, the two continuums are by no means exclusive in the sense that there can be a totalitarian and

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[39] Bob Jessop, *State Theory. Putting Capitalist States in their Place* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), pp. 340-341.

yet decentralized state, and a pluralistic and yet centralized one. It might also be argued that an existing state can never reach the extreme of either side of the two continuums.[40] However, whether a real state leans more toward one side of each of the two continuums or the other has important implications for the life of the citizens over which it exerts control. A totalitarian state results in the absence of a distinction between private and public spheres. Almost all aspects of an individual's private life and social relations fall within the realm of direct relationship with the state authority. As a result, the populace of the state becomes an "atomized society".[41] A pluralistic state allows ensembles of people to come together to act autonomously or even in concert to influence state policy. It gives a wider scope for freedom of association and civil liberty on the part of its citizens.

One of the prominent scholars who explores the relationship between state and society in different political regimes is Bob Jessop. According to him, it is difficult to generalize on the degree of the reach of the state, because in a single country, neither the form of the state nor the society is static. Moreover, each country has a different history which influences the articulation of the state with society.[42] Many political scientists would agree with Jessop. Lucien Pye, for example, stresses the difference between China and the West in this regard. To him, "civil society" is a prominent feature in Western Europe and North America, because of their unique historical evolution. The active participation of individual citizens in group organizations, which ultimately influence state decisions, is a feature of this type of society. According to Pye in many countries, including China, "civil society" is either absent or insignificant. This is because in a country such as China the peasants have been organized along particularistic principles,

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40 Stanisklav Andreski, "Is Totalitarianism a Meaningful Concept?" Paul Mason (ed.) *Totalitarianism Temporary Madness or Permanent Danger?* (London: D.C. Heath and Company, 1967), p. 31.

41 William Kornhauser, *The Politics of Mass Society* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1959), p. 32.

42 Kornhauser, *The Politics of Mass Society* , pp. 340-341.

including kinship and districts of origin.[43] Instead of the citizens forming into pressure groups, the reaction of the peasants to the state often takes the form of passive resistance, a form aptly suggested by Scott.[44] This form of local passive resistance differs in different types of state. The more totalitarian the state is, the more subtle is the form of passive resistance.

As a state, China has experienced many changes. To study its relationship with peasant society, one must look closely at how the state has evolved in history from its loosely centralized dynastic existence to its present tightly centralized and pro-active stance. According to Sheridan, before 1911 the Confucian state in China was weak with respect to territorial integration but strong in social integration.[45] In terms of territorial integration, Sheridan argues that the world of the Chinese peasant was confined to the local society made up of the village and standard market community with little everyday influence coming from outside these boundaries.[46] Transportation and communication

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[43] Lucian W. Pye, "The State and the Individual: An Overview Interpretation." *The China Quarterly* Vol. 127 (September, 1991), pp. 443-466.

[44] James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985).

[45] Territorial integration refers to "how closely regions and localities are linked together by economic and political transactions and by psychological and cultural similarities". Social integration refers to "the extent to which the various strata of society - from the ruling elite to the masses, are bound together by a common culture, by national loyalties, by functional specialization and interdependence, and by participation in national movements and undertakings". James Sheridan, *China In Disintegration The Republican Era in Chinese History, 1912-1949* (New York: The Free Press, 1975), pp. 5-12.

[46] Sheridan may be over-stating the isolation as other scholars argue that many forms of "Chinese culture" of a broad national type affected and permeated peasant life. See Loren Brandt, "Chinese agriculture and the international economy, 1870s - 1930s; a reassessment." In *Exploration of Economic History* Vol. 22, (1985), pp. 168-193. David Faure, *The Rural Economy of Pre-Liberation China* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1989). Thomas Metzger, "The State and Commerce in Imperial China." *Asian and African Studies* Vol. 6, (1970), pp. 3-46.

was limited and the reach of the central state to local rural society was not direct.[47] The key agent of social integration was the local gentry who worked closely with the magistrate on the one hand and the peasants on the other. Local gentry and government officials shared an ideology of the emperor system with its Mandate of Heaven and the philosophy of Confucianism. There was a national system of education and examinations. The central bureaucracy acquired legitimacy to rule through this examination system as did unofficial local agents in rural society.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as China moved away from the earlier Confucian state, territorial integration weakened and social integration also began to break down. Foreign control and local rebellions[48] prompted the central state to modernize and decentralize in order to maintain effective local control. For example, it involved the provinces in provincial policy-making; it formally established lower levels of government and widened local bureaucratic systems.[49] The reforms, however, came too late, and social and territorial disintegration culminated in the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911.

In 1912 a Republican state was set up to rule in the stead of the Qing, but its ability to nationally integrate China was hampered by emergent social forces. Beyond the reach of the central government in Beijing, in most of the country there existed a power vacuum which was filled by regional warlord regimes during the years 1916 to 1928. These were haphazard collections of military-political groups, each of which controlled a small portion

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47 Sheridan, *China In Disintegration The Republican Era* , pp. 12-18.

48 Anti-Confucian sentiments were the ideals behind the May 4th Movement, an urban intelligentsia movement that did not involve the rural populace. See Sheridan, *China In Disintegration The Republican Era* , p. 21.

49 Prasenjit Duara, *Culture, Power, And The State Rural North China 1900-1942* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), pp. 59-65. Duara argues that the late Qing reforms set the stage for the modern Chinese state to penetrate local society more deeply than ever before.

of China and exploited local resources.[50] Warlord predominance was an example of extreme national decentralization and disintegration with a near complete breakdown of central state authority. There was also no uniform ideology holding the country together because the Confucian examination system had been abolished in 1905. However, the local (warlord) state was strengthened and the local bureaucracy co-opted the gentry leaders of local society. Those with the biggest guns ruled, using blatant violence as a source of legitimate coercion.

In the early 1920s two political parties formed in answer to China's need for reunification, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1921, and the Guomindang[51] in 1924. The first united front between these parties was formed between 1923 and 1927, after the Soviet advisor Joffe had been sent to Guangzhou, Beijing and Shanghai in 1923 to guide the two parties. As a result, they were both organized according to the Leninist model. Together, these two parties successfully fought against the warlord regimes of southern China. However in 1927, the Guomindang broke relations with the CCP. Taking Nanjing as the capital city, the Nationalist Government constructed a Chinese state with Leninist characteristics,with democratic centralism as a guiding principle for its bureaucracy and party structure.[52] However, failing to implement the Three Principles of

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50 Duara, *Culture, Power, And The State Rural North China 1900-1942* , p. 62.

51 The Guomindang's origins can be traced to Sun Yatsen and the revolutionaries who worked to overthrow the Qing Dynasty.

52 Lenin used this term to refer to the process by which decisions are reached through a majority and that such decisions are forever binding. See Jonathan Spence, *The Search For Modern China*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990), pp. 338, 366.

the People,[53] the central state frequently had to rely on legalized violence to maintain control.[54] Although the Nationalists professed to be China's modernizers and did foster economic reforms such as improved banking facilities and road building, they never developed an effective central government to guide the country.[55] There continued to be a large discrepancy between the urban, westernized, regions of the eastern coastal areas and the rural and hinterland regions where strong but autonomous rulers had control over local society. Moreover, the warlords were still powerful in the north and northwest, while the CCP formed into soviets[56] first in Jiangxi and then in Yan'an.

Between 1937 and 1945, Japan occupied most of north and central China, areas previously held by Chiang Kai-Shek, and Chiang retreated beyond the Yangzi gorges. China was divided into three areas: the Japanese controlled territory, the Nationalist controlled territory, and the CCP controlled territory. Between 1945 and 1949, after Japan's defeat, there were only the Nationalist controlled area and the CCP controlled area. China was not reintegrated until the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) came to power in 1949. Eight years of bitter national liberation war against Japanese imperialist control had fostered a strong national ideology, giving the urban and rural populace a common purpose. By 1949, with Leninism as a guiding principle, the country was once again

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53 The "Three Principles of the People" included the restoration of the nation, the operation of popular sovereignty, and the restructuring and modernization of the economy or nationalism, democracy, and 'people's livelihood'. See Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions China From the 1800s To The 1980s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 233.

54 Sheridan, *China In Disintegration The Republican Era* , pp. 22-24.

55 Sheridan, *China In Disintegration The Republican Era* , pp. 22-26.

56 The term 'soviet' refers to an organizational technique of mass political movement. It was originated by Lenin and borrowed by the Chinese Communist leaders and adapted to meet the demands of a predominately agrarian society. For a thorough discussion of the Chinese adaptation see Ilyong J. Kim, "The Origins of Communist and Soviet Movements in China." In Gilbert Chan (ed.)*China at the Crossroads: Nationalists and Communists, 1927-1949.* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1980), pp. 185-216.

territorially and socially integrated, this time under a strong, centralized and pro-active central state.

In the post-Mao era, there has been a partial relaxation of the central state of its pro-active stance on economic management. In 1979, the post-Mao government sought to release the productive forces of the regions, so there was a deliberate move towards decentralization and the passing of control to the provinces. By the mid-1980s, the central state decentralized further. Building on its experiment in giving the municipal and prefectural governments a say in economic management in Guangdong and Fujian Provinces, the central government has now allowed the more advanced, coastal part of China to follow suit. Some of the larger state enterprises in the major cities have also been given considerable autonomy in management. In the rural areas, the decollectivization of agriculture, the revival of the local market, and the reorganization of the commune system have resulted in a partial reduction of central state policy in the direct economic management of the rural areas and local units.

From this historical overview of twentieth century China, it is clear that the relationship between the central and the local state has undergone great changes. How these affected peasant society is the theme of this thesis. From a reexamination of the different periods in twentieth century Chinese history, I shall investigate how the state, at both central and local levels, has tried to enforce the compliance of peasant society, and how peasants have formulated strategies to react to this. Have they been able to exploit the differences that sometimes existed between the local and the central state? How have peasants as families, as communities, and as a social-political strata organized to deal with the state? To what extent have they been effective? These are the questions I shall be dealing with in this thesis.

I shall follow Charles Tilly's approach and use historical sociology as a

form of analysis.[57] I will investigate state-society relationship by focusing on peasants' everyday existence, starting from the fall of the Qing and continuing with each subsequent periods of China's political history.

A Review of Existing Literature:

Before 1949, western sinologists often fell into the trap of assuming that China had an unchanging political culture. They were forced to rethink their paradigm because of the events of the Chinese Communist Revolution. Diverse interpretations soon followed. Many then saw China's socialism as totalitarian in nature, and as a direct importation of a Soviet model of governance.[58] Later, others saw Chinese socialism as pluralist, with different interest groups (bureaucratic, societal, or geographic) competing with one another for a position of political influence.[59] The different foci were part and parcel of the uncertainties of the day, when information was limited and access was difficult. Whether theoreticians used either the totalitarian or pluralist models to explain China, they usually concentrated on structural forms of political types and on party ideology. The complexities of societal reactions to state power was seldom discussed before the 1960s. The Vietnam War is often cited for having had a great influence on American scholarship and bringing a wave of behaviouralist studies that concentrated on

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[57] Other theorists that have followed the path of historical sociology include Theda Skocpol, Immanuel Wallerstein and Barrington Moore.

[58] For a detailed discussion of the totalitarian approach see Vivienne Shue, *The Reach of the State Sketches of the Chinese Body Politic* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), Chapter One.

[59] William W. Whitson, "Organizational Perspectives and Decision-Making in the Chinese Communist High Command." In Robert A. Scalpino (ed.) *Elites in the People's Republic of China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972). Michael C. Oksenberg, "Occupational Groups in Chinese Society and the Cultural Revolution." In Michael Oksenberg et al, *The Cultural Revolution: 1967 in Review* (Michigan Papers in Chinese Studies No. 2, Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1968). Peter Moody, *Opposition and Dissent in Contemporary China* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Publication: 177, 1977).

political actors rather than on political structures.[60] The Cultural Revolution also posed new challenges to sinological frameworks of interpretations. How could the Chinese state be perceived as all-encompassing when the masses were taking an active part in the process of dismantling any and all elements of authority?

As with the revolution of 1949, the new economic reforms of the 1980s acted as a catalyst, once again shaking up academic thinking. Scholars working in the China field were taken by surprise by the drastic change from collectivization to decollectivization in what seemed a remarkably short period of time. The changes in China corresponded to drastic political changes and the reemergence of civil society in Eastern Europe, e.g. Poland. New methods to accommodate and understand the changes both in China and elsewhere promoted the resurgence of state-society analysis among China scholars. The initial studies along this line emphasized crisis situations, such as rebellions and revolution,[61] rather than following Scott's work by focusing on the day to day activities of the people. However, there were some ethnographic studies on the peasants' every day world. These were written by scholars who drew their data from refugee interviews in Hong Kong. They are primarily accounts of the reactions of Cantonese peasants to the Maoist state.Works by Anita Chan, Richard Madsen, Jonathan Unger, Ezra Vogel, Jean Oi, Martin Whyte, William Parish, and Bernard Frolic are of this type.[62]

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60 Harry Harding, "The study of Chinese politics: toward a third generation of scholarship." *World Politics*, No. 36 (January 1984), pp. 284-307.

61 See Elizabeth Perry, *Rebels and Revolutionaries in North China 1845-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980). Robert Marks, *Rural Revolution in South China Peasants and the Making of History in Haifeng County, 1570-1930* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1984).

62 Anita Chan, Richard Madsen, and Jonathan Unger, *Chen Village Under Mao and Deng* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). Richard Madsen, *Morality and Power in a Chinese Village* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). Ezra Vogel, *Canton under Communism: Programs and Politics in a Provincial Capital, 1949-1968*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969). William Parish, and Martin Whyte, *Village and Family in Contemporary China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978). Jean Oi, *State and Peasant in Contemporary China*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989). Bernard Frolic, *Mao's People*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980).

With the opening of China for research, many more ethnographic accounts are now based on actual field research. However, the ease of reaching south China from Hong Kong, the attraction to this "economic miracle" of the Pearl River Delta region and the overseas Chinese ties to this area have led to a continued concentration of studies on southern China.[63] In the North, Philip Huang's[64] and Ramon Myers'[65] works on the North China Plain are limited by the time periods they studied. Both studies made use of the Mantetsu Surveys[66] which were conducted during the years of Japanese penetration (1935-1942) and consequently, neither study extends into the years after 1949. The recent volume by a group of American scholars, *Chinese Village Socialist State,* [67] also deals with an area in the North China Plain region, but only takes us up to 1960, leaving a gap

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[63] Such studies would include Sulamith Heins Potter and Jack M. Potter,*China's peasants The anthropology of a revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Yuen-fong Woon, "From Mao to Deng: Life Satisfaction Among Rural Women In an Emigrant Community In South China." *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, No. 25, (January 1990), pp. 139-169. Siu, *Agents and Victims in South China. Accomplices In Rural Revolution* . Graham Johnson, "Family Strategies and Economic Transformation in Rural China: Some Evidence from the Pearl River Delta." Deborah Davis and Steven Harrell (eds.) *Chinese Families in the Post-Mao Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 103-138. New research appears to be departing from this region as scholars are now reaching out to all corners of China to conduct studies.

[64] Phillip C. Huang, *The Peasant Economy and Social Change in North China.* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985).

[65] Ramon Myers, *The Chinese Peasant Economy: Agricultural Development in Hopei and Shantung, 1890-1949* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980).

[66] The Mantetsu Surveys (short for Minami Manshu Tetsudo Kabushiki Kaisha) were Japanese field surveys carried out under the auspices of the Japanese South Manchurian Railway Company during the years 1935-42. See Huang, *The Peasant Economy and Social Change in North China,* pp. 34-35.

[67] Edward Friedman, Paul Pickowicz, Mark Selden, and Kay Ann Johnson, *Chinese Village Socialist State* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1991).

of fifteen years before new studies on this region become available.[68] A example of recent work on north China, covering the reform era period, is Ellen Judd's work, *Gender & Power In Rural North China*,[69] which focuses on three villages near the coastal region of north Shandong and provides material on state-rural society relations in the context of gender and power.

Surveying this existing literature, I find that China scholars do not agree on how deep the reach of the Chinese central state was during either the "collective" or the "reform" eras. Siu suggests that during the collective era, the central state struck deep roots in society. The local cadres were under the tight control of the central state and were not only its agents, but also its victims. The political straitjacket worn by a local cadre limited his/her tolerance for the everyday resistance of local peasant society to the intrusive central state policy. Shue and Oi, on the other hand, suggest that during the Maoist era the local cadres were the go-betweens in state-society relations and that the role of the local cadres was not only to ensure the enforcement of central state policy but also to help modify central policy to suit their own needs as well as those of local society. The local cadre may have been an agent of the central state but was also an agent of the local peasant society because he or she had to live in a village far removed from Beijing. Shue goes on to suggest that under decollectivization, peasant society now must deal directly with the central state, which in turn allows for greater central state penetration and fewer avenues for overt resistance from peasant society.[70]

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[68] Mark Selden, "Family Strategies and Structures in Rural North China." Deborah Davis and Steven Harrell (eds.) *Chinese Families in the Post-Mao Era*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 139-164.

[69] Ellen Judd, *Gender and Power in Rural North China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

[70] Shue, *Reach of the State , Sketches of the Chinese Body Politic*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

Judd's thesis goes a step beyond Shue by introducing the idea that the post-Mao state is a "grounded state", a productive force operating from within the constituent elements of everyday life both formally and informally to control society. Not only does this grounded state create the structures of rural society but is an active part of the dynamics through which peasants operate in their social life.[71] According to her theory,[72] under collectivization, there was formal structure of central state power in the rural areas in the guise of the brigade and production teams. With the advent of decollectivization, more power was given to local village and township administration. The economy also became much more reliant on market forces, allowing for increased tolerance of popular initiatives. However, a "grounded state power" has evolved to ensure a continued increased presence of the central state in local village affairs.[73]

If grounded central state power has evolved in China in the post-Mao era, as Judd suggests, how much ability does peasant society have to manoeuvre within these confines? According to Kelliher, Chinese peasants still have a chance to exercise unofficial political power. Because of economic independence derived from subsistence farming, they can bring about gradual political change. By methods such as passive and localized resistance, implementation of alternatives, and the manipulation of existing policies - practices which echo Scott's analysis - Chinese peasants are able to influence central government decisions and sometimes to push the central state into abandoning schemes and strategies they deem nonsensical.[74]

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[71] Judd, *Gender & Power In Rural North China*, p. 252.

[72] Judd, *Gender & Power In Rural North China*, p. 251.

[73] Judd, *Gender & Power In Rural North China*, pp. 250-253.

[74] Daniel Kelliher, *Peasant Power In China The Era of Rural Reform 1979-1989* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 233-255.

The problem with the ongoing debate among scholars such as Oi, Siu, Shue, Judd and Kelliher is that they have based their studies on a part of China yet tend to theorize about the whole of rural China. China is a vast country with great diversity. There is wide economic and social disparity between regions brought about by climate, relative soil fertility and the degree of remoteness from, or access to towns and transportation. Making valid generalizations about state-peasant relationships from a few local, regional studies is extremely difficult, particularly in conditions where systematic sampling is not possible.

For these reasons, I shall employ a north-south comparative study using the North China Plain in Hebei and Shandong Provinces and the Pearl River Delta region as my case studies. These two areas represent regional differences which exist between north and south China and, at the same time, also show marked similarities, including early access to transportation and communication lines and economic prosperity.

North China and South China: A Comparative Approach

The North China Plain extends over the entire Province of Hebei and the northern part of Shandong Province. It covers approximately 175,000 square miles. This area is often considered the historical heartland of China and has been the capital of the country in many dynasties and during the present regime. As a result, it attracted many settlers, and the villages are therefore densely populated.[75] Buck's surveys of the 1930s estimated that farm population density was only slightly less than 1,234 per square mile.[76] Falling within the boundary of the "Winter Wheat/Kaoliang" area, much of the land in the North

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[75] Huang, *The Peasant Economy and Social Change in North China*, pp. 60-62.

[76] John Lossing Buck, *Land Utilization in China* (New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp., 1964), pp. 58-59.

China Plain is used for farming but low productivity has resulted in a predominance of subsistence cultivation in this area. With an average annual rainfall of 19.5 inches and an average growing season of 6 to 7 months, multiple cropping is not possible here. Cropping patterns usually follow the system of three crops in two years[77] or inter-planting of two different crops.[78]

Irrigation is not extensive in this northern region and, in fact, Huang notes that in the 1930s only 10% of the cultivated land was irrigated. Water used for this purpose came from small wells. Even after the People's Republic of China government undertook to drill more wells for irrigation in the 1950s and early 1960s, the amount of irrigated land did not substantially increase.[79]

Exacerbating the problems for the farmers is the frequency of natural disasters in this area. Originating in the mountains and plateaux to the west, the Yellow River picks up soil and debris from the eroding slopes as it flows down toward the plain. As the gradient levels off, the river deposits these great quantities of silt which, over time, have forced the river to change course, resulting in extensive flooding. Colossal dikes were built historically to alleviate flooding but they were continually burst by the force of the river and

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[77] Three crops in two years consists of sowing the spring crops of sorghum, millet or maize in May/June and harvesting in September/October. Shortly after harvest the winter wheat crop is planted, before the first frost arrives. This crop is then harvested the following June, when it is too late in the season to plant the sorghum or millet crops. A crop of soybean follows the wheat crop, which is harvested in October/November. That following winter the land is allowed to lie fallow to replenish its nutrients. See Huang, *The Peasant Economy and Social Change in North China.*

[78] The method of inter planting adopted in this region involves winter wheat being planted in every second or third row with millet or maize being planted in alternating rows in the springtime. The wheat is harvested after the millet or maize in the fall. According to Huang, the inter-planting method was not extensively used prior to 1949. After 1949, however, northern peasant farmers were able to use this method to increase land productivity equivalent to double cropping production. See Huang, *The Peasant Economy and Social Change in North China,* pp. 60-65.

[79] Friedman, et al. *Chinese Village, Socialist State*, pp. 48-49.

floods persist. In 1961 a large dam was built on the Yellow River trying to control flooding, but, as a 1993 World Bank Report indicates, small floods continue to occur about every two years and sediment deposition remains a chronic and serious problem.[80] Waterlogging of the land often occurs as an aftermath of this inundation, creating large tracts of marshland which are difficult to cultivate and which attract and shelter pests such as locusts.

As a result of such adverse conditions, the North China Plain has historically been an area of subsistence farmers, most of whom are owner cultivators who remain in their villages attending to family needs. Although in some prosperous villages there were resident landlords with holdings much larger than those of the south, most villages in poorer areas were inhabited by small owner-cultivators. The low level of agricultural commercialization led to an inward looking society easily dominated by the central state which is situated right in their vicinity.[81]

Pearl River Delta:

The Pearl River Delta is the most fertile part of the province of Guangdong. It falls within Buck's "Double Cropping Rice Area".[82] It is formed by the conjunction of three major rivers, the West, East and North Rivers, together with some minor tributaries. Through the reclamation of silt beds it extends to 3600 square mile. Growing conditions in the delta are favourable. The annual rainfall averages 66 inches, and the climate is tropical with temperatures ranging from 57 degrees Fahrenheit in February to 84 degrees in July. Extensive irrigation network managed in the early years by lineages have further provided

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80 World Bank Report, *China Yellow River Basin Investment Planning Study* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank Publication, 1993).

81 Huang, *The Peasant Economy and Social Change in North China*, Chapter 3.

82 Buck, *Land Utilization*, pp. 82-85.

ample water for multiple cropping of rice. Subsidiary cash crops such as citrus fruits, sugar cane, and mulberry leaves for the silk industry are grown on land not suited to wet rice cultivation.

Because of its productivity, the delta area has a high population density of over 5500 people per square mile. The higher value of agricultural lands led after the Song to a higher percentage of tenant farmers than in the north resulting in social polarization in these village communities. At the same time, large lineage structures have developed that give southern villages a greater degree of community solidarity in their relations with the state than those in the north.[83]

Historically, the Pearl River Delta was highly commercialized. The ability of the land to produce a surplus allowed the peasants to engage extensively in market activities. This region was also one of the first parts of China opened to foreign trade during the 18th century. It was also the region where overseas emigration was the heaviest in the 19th and early 20th century. Its relation with the central state has, therefore, been different from that of North China Plain.

Such differences in terms of natural endowment and social organization make a north-south comparison imperative for anyone interested in looking at the historical evolution of state-peasant relationship. Comparing these two regions is the approach I am taking for my thesis. Beginning with Chapter Two, I shall devote one chapter for each period of 20th century history to examine and compare the relationship between state and peasant society in the North China Plain and the Pearl River Delta regions. Chapter Two will concentrate on the period from the end of the Qing Dynasty to the end of the warlord era and early Republican years. Chapter Three will focus on the Nationalist period till 1949. Chapter Four will deal with the first years of Communist rule. Chapter Five focuses

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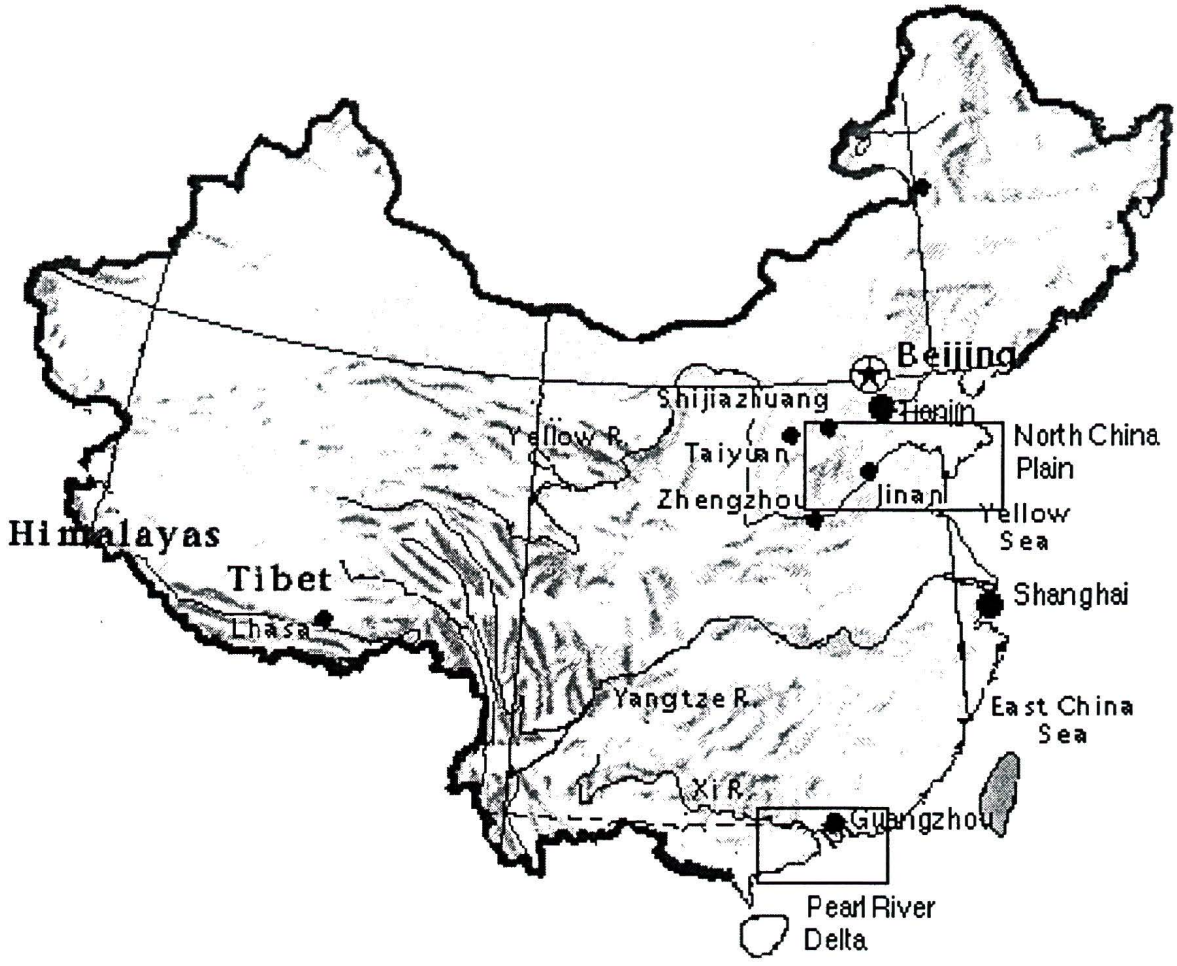
83 Patricia Ebrey, Patricia and James Watson (eds.) *Kinship Organization in Late Imperial China, 1000-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

on the second half of Mao's rule from 1961 to 1976 and chapter Six will concentrate on the changes since the inauguration of the post-Mao reforms. The concluding chapter will revisit the theoretical issues outlined in this introduction.

Fig. 1. Map of China - Areas of Study

(Source: Adapted from Grolier Multimedia Encyclopaedia, 1996)



Chapter Two: State-Peasant Relationship 1900-1927

The focus of this chapter is on state-peasant relations in the turbulent years between 1900 and 1927 when China was in disarray. Before 1919, the high-handed military incursions of foreign powers into Chinese territory and punitive war reparations had both humiliated the Chinese state and exposed its lamentable weakness. New ideas of a government based on Western forms of democracy were being openly discussed across the country as young intellectuals educated abroad returned to their deeply traditional and inward-looking homeland and saw it with new eyes.[1] Both the right of the imperial throne to govern and its ability to do so were challenged by 1905. Although its hostility was directed primarily against the presence of foreigners, the rebellion of the Boxers brought latent nationalist feelings to the surface and strengthened a belief among educated and progressively-minded people that a new, more just, society was needed if China were to retain its autonomy and take a position of importance in the world.

Recognizing the threat to its continued existence, the Qing acknowledged a need for modernization[2] and sought by means of various reforms to calm the groundswell of dissatisfaction and to stave off disaster[3] . Changes were made but, instituted with reluctance and over the opposition of conservative officials they were inadequate as well as too late and the attempt to hold onto power proved futile. By 1912 the Qing dynasty had collapsed and was replaced by a republican government with Sun Yat-sen as provisional

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[1] For a good summary of the theoretical development of political modernization in China during the last years of the Qing see Philip Kuhn, "Local Self-Government Under the Republic." Frederic Wakeman Jr. and Carolyn Grant (eds.), *Conflict and Control In Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), pp. 257-298.

[2] Modernization in this context refers to the ideology of the modern state which promotes tasks such as reforming banking and currency, standardizing weights and measures, creating a professional urban police force, and building systems of transportations and communication.

[3] The term disaster refers to the possible demise of the Qing dynasty.

president who was soon followed by Yuan Shikai at its head. It was the initial intention of the leaders of the Republic to eradicate all that was wrong with imperial rule and to introduce a new system that would serve Chinese society both justly and fairly. Building upon the reforms made by the faltering Qing government, the republican authorities at first set about to form a constitutional, democratic style of government[4]. The formative years of the Republic (1913-16), when its ideals were strong and its hopes high, should have been a halcyon period for China but instead, the country was thrown into near-anarchy. Although government policy had altered, methods of policy implementation had not, and the reach of the central state into local society became even more tenuous than under the old regime. The state's consuming need and continual demands for revenue in the form of taxes remained however, and before the new government had found its feet, peasant disaffection[5] had become endemic.

This chapter will examine state policies envisaged by the Republican leaders to address a modern political agenda and the state's inability to carry out its policies. The reaction of the peasants to the changes, and what we know of their resistance to them, will

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[4] The term "constitutional democratic style government" refers to the instituting of a nationally elected Constitutional Parliament . Although the Qing reforms advocated a constitution giving the people a chance to elect representatives, the emphasis lay on the consolidation of the absolute rule of the sovereign. See William Tung,*The Political Institutions of Modern China* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), pp. 8-43.

[5] I am taking a position that is aligned with Mao Zedong's writing of 1926 in which he put forth that Chinese peasants were ripe for revolution because of the alienation they suffered at the hands of landlords and an extractive state. This position runs contrary to many scholars who maintain that China was on the road to modernization which would have provided a better standard of living for the general populace, including the rural peasantry. This academic debate over the presence of peasant alienation during the early part of the 20th century suggests that China was a complex society containing a high degree of inter and intra-regional variation. Such complexity precludes the legitimacy of characterizing all of China with categorical statements. What may have been rural advancement in one area may not have been the case in another. Furthermore the modernizing activities of the the rising capitalist class in such areas as Shanghai does not include a better standard of living for all. It is not my intention to theorize that peasant alienation was endemic everywhere in China but merely to pose the question with respect to the North China Plain and the Pearl River Delta, thereby drawing a clearer picture of the relationship between the state and peasant society in these two areas. See Mao Zedong, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung, Volume One* (London: Lawrence & Wishart Ltd., 1955).

be analyzed with attention given to both the differences and the similarities between state-peasant relations in the North China Plain and in the Pearl River Delta. The period under discussion is best understood as one of a triangular power-play between the state, the peasantry, and new political forces.

From 1913 to 1924, the state was weak in coordination and arbitration between the centre and the provinces. This absence of strong coordination and arbitration continued down the "chain of command", affecting the provinces, the counties, and the villages. Without being able to control a bureaucracy whose role it was to carry out state policies and to check autonomous tendencies of local officials, the early Republic's central state lost, or some might argue, never gained, the legitimacy to rule.

As the state lost its authority in peasant communities, there arose new rural leaders who wielded tremendous power. Sometimes these men were the appointed representatives of the state and sometimes simply local power holders who owed allegiance to none. The authority of these leaders tended to be transient and depended upon their local popularity and circumstances. As Alitto points out, the lack of any legitimate state authority in rural society during the early Republic led to many rival claims to power by men whose right to rule lay in the threat of violence. Warlords and bandits both attained power at the barrel of a gun and in the eyes of the peasant there was often very little difference between them. For the early Republican period, when referring to local power holders I shall differentiate between the unofficial and official by using the term "state official" for those acting on behalf of the state and "warlords" for those acting autonomously. It should be noted however that not infrequently the line between these two categories was a shifting one.

To talk about the response of peasants to the state and the local leaders I shall use the term "peasant survival tactics" to incorporate both predatory strategies and preventative

strategies described by Perry.[6] Both these strategies were in direct response to the lack of strong central governance. It is my position that actions such as the turning of individual households to banditry, which Perry distinguishes as being "predatory tactics", were no less potent a means of survival than was the creation of village militia to defend communities against external threats. Before launching into a discussion of political and social change, however, I shall provide some historical background on the reach of the state in the 19th century.

During the late Imperial period, formal governance consisted of the central government, the provincial government, the county government, and the sub-county offices which were agencies of the county government. According to C.K. Yang, official governance reached down to the county level, a jurisdiction that included on average between 200 to 500 villages and a population of 200,000 to 300,000 persons.[7] A local magistrate was the only official bureaucrat to oversee the affairs of the county, which made direct rule by the central government over such a large populace almost impossible. To maintain control over an area of this size, and to increase its effectiveness, the Imperial government employed various unofficial systems of social organization and welfare at the county, sub-county and village levels. The *baojia* and *lijia* decimal systems[8] were used to

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6 Elizabeth Perry, *Rebels and Revolutionaries in North China, 1845-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980).

7 C.K. Yang, *A Chinese Village in Early Communist Transition* (Boston: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1974), p. 103. Yang's figures for the number of villages in a county are representative of both the North China Plain area and the Pearl River Delta. Gamble gives the number of towns and villages for Ding Xian in 1930 at 453 and a slightly larger population of 400,000. See Sidney Gamble,*Ting Hsien: A North China Rural Communist* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968), p. 4.

8 For the best account of the baojia and lijia systems see Kung-chuan Hsiao, *Rural China Imperial Control in the Nineteenth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967), pp. 43-144.

maintain law and order and to collect taxes, the granary system[9] ensured a supply of grain during times of disaster, and the *xiangyue*[10] ensured ideological harmony in local village society.

The *baojia* and *lijia* were artificial[11] decimal systems of organization that attempted to undertake the tasks of policing and taxing villagers. Although ambitious in conception and perhaps effective in the early Qing dynasty, these two systems had, by the end of the 19th century, more form than function and their effectiveness had become minimal. The arrangement of the *baojia* was that ten families formed a *bai*, ten *bai* made up a *jia* and ten *jia* made up a *bao*. Each level was supposed to have a leader or representative. In reality the leader of the *bao* level, known as the *cheng*, was a quasi-state agent. Although the cheng was chosen by members of the *bao* and usually was of middle or poor peasant background, he reported to county authorities on local affairs. The formation of secret societies, the presence of suspicious strangers, and the organization of village security, all were the business of the *baojia*. The *baojia* also organized the conscription of men to perform military duty, and conducted household census to ensure that all able-bodied males would fulfil their military and labour obligations to the state.

The *lijia* was similar to the *baojia* but its job was tax collection. Its decimal formation was approximately the same as the *baojia's*, and the leaders were also middle or poor peasants chosen by the household representatives. When the Qing started to decline the ability of the *baojia* and *lijia* to function efficiently also declined. As unofficial

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9 See Hsiao, *Rural China Imperial Control*, pp. 144-184.

10 See Hsiao, *Rural China Imperial Control*, pp. 184-261.

11 I use the word "artificial" to emphasize that the 100 households that encompassed the *bao* were not necessarily in line with the natural village. Often a village was either of a much smaller or larger composition than 100 households. The artificial demarcation often was adjusted to the natural village composition. See Kuhn, "Local Self-Government Under the Republic." p. 259.

community leaders became more powerful they used the *baojia* and *lijia* systems for their own gain. In this way, local elites were easily able to avoid taxation and hide their wrongdoing from the state. By the time the Qing era came to an end, the *baojia* and *lijia* systems had lost their usefulness to the state and had become an impediment to state control of local society.

The granary system was to set up public granaries to house grain donated by each peasant household. These were to be used in times of hardship. Poor peasant households unable to harvest sufficient crops would be able to borrow this grain to tide them over to their next harvest. One public granary usually serviced a number of neighbouring villages, rather than only one village. Although concerned to prevent disaster, especially in famine-stricken areas, the granary system was open to abuse and its application frequently flawed. A lack of accountability of those in charge of the granaries all too often led to graft and corruption, negating the purpose and usefulness of the system.

The *xiangyue* was a system of ideological indoctrination of villagers and townsfolk dating back to 1076. A local degree holder would be chosen to lecture to villagers on the moral code of the Confucian doctrine. In villages where lineages were powerful, the *xiangyue* would employ lineage leaders to teach correct morals. By the end of the 19th century, the *xiangyue* had evolved into a police or control system and was merged with the *baojia*. The position of *xiangyue* was part of a larger system of ideological control that promoted the use of Confucian scholars for the purposes of the state. Ideological indoctrination however was eventually bought at a high price. When the dynasty needed to modernize and seek alternative methods of governance, the Confucian scholar was unable to adapt to the new demands.

Although the Qing systems of organization and social welfare, such as *baojia*, *lijia*,

granary system and the *xiangyue*, were based on sound ideas, they only worked successfully in times of peace. The control of the county magistrate over the quasi-officials under him was weak. Moreover, the quasi-officials themselves were peasants of the middle or poor class, without much influence over their communities. In reality, power was wielded by unofficial local leaders who often abused it. In remote villages, there was no disinterested government officials to see that imperial decisions made for the general welfare were put into effect. In times of political turmoil and uncertainty, when the Mandate of Heaven was put to the test, the system at times fell apart.[12]

By the end of the 19th century, an internal push for a modern government led the Qing, in its last attempts at ruling, to inaugurate the "New Policies"(*xinzheng*). These reforms included the abolition of the Confucian examination system and the introduction of a modern system of education, the reorganization of the army with military training modelled on Western principles, the formation of local police forces, the creation of elected assemblies at the national, provincial and county levels, and the development of self-government at the village level.[13] The new system of education was an attempt to lay the foundations of a new society in which people could learn technical skills needed to prepare them for specific roles in life. The new schools would provide more education for a greater number of people at a local level and a broader spectrum of education and training at a higher level. The remodelling of the military along Western lines was undertaken so that China's forces might become the equal of those in the Western world and Japan. The

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[12] Kuhn, "Local Self-Government Under the Republic." pp. 257-298.

[13] Kathryn Bernhardt, *Rents, Taxes, and Peasant Resistance The Lower Yangzi Region 1840-1950*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 152. It has been argued that village governance had been local and autonomous prior to the implementation of the "New Policies" . However the way local self-government differed from the past was in the stance of the central government. Traditionally, local self-government was tolerated by the central state because there were too few bureaucrats to govern such an expansive country as China. Under the Qing reforms, local self-government became official. What had been quasi-officials became official agents of the state. As well, the creation of the local police force gave the local state agents a permanent mechanism of coercive control. See Hsiao, *Rural China Imperial Control* , pp.261-264.

development of village police forces was to ensure the maintenance of law and order in areas out of the direct reach of the state. Local self-government refers to the creation and formation of executive councils at township and village levels, and although these councils had very narrow powers, it was their duty to oversee local affairs. The legalization of local power legitimized much that in the past had been controlled by quasi-officials and village leaders such as the *bao-cheng*, the *li-cheng* and the *xiangyue*, and extended the direct reach of the state. Although these attempts at political reform did not save the Qing, they were a beginning and should be seen as a part of the movement that led to the new Republic.

The new state headed by Yuan Shikai in 1912 adopted and built upon the Qing reforms and pushed further towards a Constitutional style of government. The first Provisional Constitution of the Republic, dated March 11, 1912, and the subsequent Constitutional Compact of 1912 set out the rights and duties of the citizens, the legislative assembly, the office of the President and Vice-President, the members of the Cabinet, and the Judiciary.[14] Ostensibly the Constitution represented a complete departure from traditional sovereign rule; people were to rule through an elected legislature rather than through the Mandate of Heaven. However, in reality this was not exactly democratic because of intimidation during the 1913 elections and because Yuan Shikai ruled through a new government body known as the Consultative Yuan which alone could interpret the Constitution.[15] Needless to say, no members of the opposition party were selected as members of the Consultative Yuan.

After the death of Yuan Shikai in 1916, the central state adopted another Constitution that was theoretically democratic in content. This Constitution was replaced

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[14] This Constitution was the working paper for the first year of the Republic in which Sun Yat-Sen was President and the capital city was Nanjing. By 1912, however the Presidency had been given to Yuan Shih-Kai and the capital city of the country moved back to Beijing.

[15] Yuan Shih-Kai dissolved Parliament January 28, 1914 and it was not reinstated until after his death. See Tung, *The Political Institutions of Modern China*, pp. 59-90.

several times during the years 1919 to 1931. Sheridan suggests that the idea of a republican government was irrelevant to the Chinese way of life and that republican institutions were at odds with the distribution of power in the country. As a consequence, the formation of the republic opened the way to territorial disintegration.[16] The ability of various levels of government to manipulate policy for their own gain left the central state virtually powerless beyond the immediate vicinity of Beijing during the years .

Ostensibly, the power of the central state extended into the local sphere through various state agents. At the provincial level, the central state was represented by a governor[17] who oversaw the civil officials, the police and the militia of the province. The governor also was empowered by the national government to supervise finance, justice, and other administrative matters within his province. Under Yuan Shih-kai's leadership, Provincial Assemblies were outlawed. However, after his death in 1916 provincial assemblies were once again formed and the governor became less a central state representative and more a player in the provincial legislative process. By 1920 certain provinces, including Guangdong, were formulating provincial constitutions whereby provincial assemblies members, including the governor, would be elected by the people of the province.[18] This type of action on the part of the provinces illustrates the political power play between the national and provincial levels of government.

The next level below the province was the district which had district assemblies and consultative councils in place by 1919-1920. The head administrator of the district government was the magistrate who was either appointed by the governor upon the recommendations of the district assembly or selected and commissioned by the governor

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16 Sheridan, *China In Disintegration The Republican Era in Chinese History*, p. 56.

17 Under the Yuan Shih-Kai administration the "governor" was titled "inspector-general".

18 Tung, *The Political Institutions of Modern China*, p. 85.

from the nominees chosen by the district assembly and approved by popular vote.[19] The district assemblies were to oversee the administration of matters of a local nature such as irrigation, education, communications, industry and public enterprises, sanitation and public welfare. District consultative councils were to oversee tax collection so that decisions made by the assembly were properly financed and executed.

The lowest level of government in the rural area was the village[20] which was supposed to be 'self governing". The residents were to elect members to form the assembly and the village head was to be chosen from the assembly. However, Tung argues that the district government oversaw and controlled the actions of the village assembly and left it little room for actual self-government. Other scholars suggest that in addition to this, autonomous local leaders used the village government apparatus to further their own power, instead of in the interest of the peasants themselves.[21]

How then did "local self-governing" affect the peasant? First, it must be remembered that the Chinese peasant had been used to the Old Order that gave the Son of Heaven unquestioned legitimacy to rule. Under that order anyone acting in the name of the Emperor, such as a magistrate or even the magistrate's quasi-official, had to be obeyed. When the Qing fell and cultural changes such as the elimination of the "scholar-official" occurred, a leadership vacuum was created, waiting to be filled. Although the new government made attempts at Constitutional planning, China did not become united as long as there was no strong central power dictating who had legitimate local authority. In both

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[19] *Ibid.*, p. 86.

[20] A village had to be of a certain size to have its own legislative body and if it were not large enough, it would be jurisdictionally joined together with one or two others.

[21] Guy Alitto, "Rural Elites in Transition: China's Cultural Crisis and the Problem of Legitimacy." Susan Mann Jones (ed.)*Selected Papers from the Center for Far Eastern Studies*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979), pp. 218-75.

the north[22] and the south[23] it was wealth and power which gave legitimacy to a local leader. Whoever had control of forms of organized violence ruled. The uncertainty of such tenuous and transient legitimacy inevitably led to resistance by the peasants, who seldom benefited and frequently suffered from the power struggles of rival contenders.

One of the major grievances among peasants was the oppressive taxation system. When the new Chinese Republic took the path of modernization it faced the crucial task of finding ways to finance its policies, as did the Qing government when implementing the "New Policies." Like the Qing, it had few sources to tap other than land taxes[24] and certain commercial taxes such as the likin tax.[25] Crippling indemnities owed to foreign powers and rising military expenditure necessitated the creation by the central state of a new tax, the *tankuan*. This was still essentially a land-based tax, but unlike the land tax it was not applied to individual landholdings. Instead, an arbitrary amount was applied to the village as a whole and it became the village's responsibility to decide how the tax burden would be met. From the state's point of view, the *tankuan* had the advantage of leaving little room for evasion, as it was not necessary to know the amount of land being taxed. To the village leaders it was a nuisance, forcing them to devise new methods of assessment. In the peasants' view, the *tankuan* was oppressive, a tax levied with little

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[22] David Buck argues that with increased movement of richer villagers to the cities the leadership role in the countryside was left to those who had military power. See David D. Buck, "The Provincial Elite in Shantung During the Republican Period." *Modern China*, Vol. 1, No. 4, (October, 1975), pp. 417-446.

[23] Similar events occurred in the south as in the north. The increase in absentee landlordism caused a breakdown in the relationship between landlord and tenant. See Robert Marks, (1984) *Rural Revolution in South China Peasants and the Making of History in Haifeng County, 1570-1930* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984).

[24] The land tax was originally a head-tax that was applied to every male adult in the village regardless of land ownership. In 1724, the head-tax was done away with and a tax based on the amount of land owned was brought in as a replacement.

[25] Commercial taxes included the salt tax, customs duties and the likin tax all of which were used by both the central and provincial governments to extract local revenue.

regard to the taxpayers' capacity to pay. Not only was there no systematic way of determining how much each village[26] owed but the tax could be applied many times in the course of the year. The nature of the tax made it too tempting not to use whenever revenue was badly needed. Duara notes that the *tankuan* was supposed to be levied twice a year but some villages in north China reported that the *tankuan* had been applied up to ten times in some years.[27] It was the arbitrariness of the *tankuan* that made this new tax one of the most resented.

Complicating the issue of taxation and related to it was the fact of provincial strength that tended to be gained at the expense of the centre. There were distinct and separate sources of central and provincial government revenue but sources of revenue below the provincial level were undifferentiated. As a result, both levels of government drew their revenue from the county and the villages. As the provinces grew more powerful, especially during the years 1916-1927, taxes intended for the centre were often siphoned off and appropriated by the provinces. Duara notes that provincial revenues in Hebei increased 42 percent from 1913-16 to 1931-34 and in Shandong for the same period there was an increase of 56 percent without corresponding increase in the gross domestic product. The expansion of provincial revenue suggests an increasing degree of control by the provinces over resources and, of course, a corresponding decline in revenue for the central government.[28] The scrambling for tax monies by the different levels of government led to additional surcharges being applied to just about every activity. There was a tax on theatre tickets, a temple tax on the purchase of incense and a poll tax on all

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[26] Prasenjit Duara, *Culture, Power And The State Rural North China 1900-1942* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), p. 196.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 218.

[28] Duara, *Culture, Power And The State Rural North China 1900-1942*, pp. 66-67.

those numbered in the census.[29] Irrational taxation in the Pearl River Delta included a pawn shop tax, ferry tax, wine tax, butcher donation, fortress fee and cigar donation.[30]

The creation of new taxes and surcharges was accompanied by a change in the system of tax collection. In the past the quasi-official local leaders, such as the *li-cheng*, undertook the role of tax collector, under the watchful eye of the unofficial local leader. This kind of tax collection was of a familiar nature as it was carried out by local people, not by outside state officials ignorant of local circumstances. The unofficial village leader and the quasi-official were often one and the same person. In other cases the tax collector would have been one of the local "gentry".[31] Whether the position was filled by one person or by two people the fact remains that village leaders were agents of the state and performed services such as supervising public works, famine relief, dispute resolution, and local defense. They were agents of the village also as it was essential that local interests be furthered. The mounting number of taxes under the republican government put extreme pressure on the sensitive position of the local leader, for how in good conscience could a well-respected village head, under the banner of taxation, drain the villagers not only of surplus but of needed income? The position of tax collector was now filled by a new type

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[29] Roxanne Prazniak, "Tax Protest at Laiyang Shandong 1910: Commoner Organization Versus the County Political Elite." *Modern China* Vol. 6, No. 1, (January, 1980), pp. 41-71.

[30] Alvin So,*The South China Silk District: Local Historical Transformation and World System Theory* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1986), p. 142.

[31] The "gentry" of China's imperial past has been defined by scholars as either a "scholar-official class" or a particular "socioeconomic class" that is rich enough to support an elite lifestyle. See C.L. Chang, *The Chinese Gentry: Studies on Their Role in Nineteenth Century Chinese Society* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1955), p. xviii, and Fei Hsiao-tung *China's Gentry: Essays in Rural-Urban Relations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), p.6. Both scholars are probably correct inasmuch as the unofficial local leader needed to be literate, which would indicate a degree holder of, at least, the lowest order (the kungsheng), as well as the necessity for a private income as the role of local leader did not produce much monetary compensation and the tasks involved were time consuming. See Sidney Gamble, *North China Villages: Social, Political and Economic Activities Before 1933* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), pp. 50-53.

of local leader, or "new gentry,"[32] one who had financial and military power. Kuhn suggests that this new local leader might be best described as either "evil gentry" (*lieshen*) or "local bully" (*tuhao*). According to Kuhn an "evil gentry" was a member of the gentry of lower degree holding status who broke the law for personal gain and a "local bully" was a man of wealth but no degree status and whose community power was exercised by coercion and illegal ways.[33] Alitto takes the characterization of the new local leader one step further by maintaining that the inability of the central state to legitimize local power holders led to a blending of "evil gentry" and "local bullies" into a new hybrid that was often a bandit, warlord, militarist, landlord, local bully and evil gentry all in one.[34]

These ruthless men were not necessarily local inhabitants. Prazniak, in her study of Laiyang, Shandong, describes the new merchant tax farmer as one of the types who took over the job of tax collection from warlords and state officials. The merchant tax farmer did not reside in the village but in a nearby city.[35] Often part of a tax farming consortium, he was an outsider to the communities in which he collected. In the Pearl River Delta powerful private agencies were hired by the provincial government to provide a

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[32] The term "new gentry" refers to a new class in society that developed after the abolition of the Examination System in 1905. This new class was made up of *nouveau riches* from all walks of life who were educating their children in the new schools and were pursuing a lifestyle similar to those of traditional scholars. During the republican years the "new gentry" came to be known not only for their financial security but also for their military power. It was members of the "new gentry" who came to head local militias both in the north and south. See Kuhn, "Local Self-Government Under the Republic." pp. 257-298.

[33] Kuhn, "Local Self-Government Under the Republic." pp. 286-7.

[34] Alitto, "Rural Elites in Transition: China's Cultural Crisis and the Problem of Legitimacy." pp. 218-75.

[35] For a good discussion of tax brokerage and tax merchant farming see Susan Mann, "The Organization of Trade at the County Level: Brokerage And Tax Farming In The Republican Period." Susan Mann Jones (ed.) *Selected Papers from the Center for Far Eastern Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979).

"donation merchant" to collect the tax for the state.[36] Because the state did not pay any commission to the donation merchant or tax farmer, this official recompensed himself, usually by exploiting the many opportunities for graft and corruption that the job presented. Consequently, there was little assurance that taxes collected for the state would reach their intended destination. In the past, tax collectors earned a small portion of the monies collected as a token of services. Under the new system taxes rose in proportion to the greed of the collector and the rising number of new taxes and surcharges gave the tax farmers license to abuse their office.[37] County and provincial governments found the practice of farming out tax collection to their benefit as it provided them with a network of agents. For the tax farmer the role gave opportunity to acquire wealth, manipulate community ritual such as the management of ancestral estates, and to gain tremendous political power.[38]

Historians of China, like Bianco[39] , have stressed taxation as the major cause of peasant rebellion during the republican years. I suggest, however, that the reasons behind peasant resistance were markedly different in the north and in the south. In the North China Plain there was an overwhelming proportion of small owner-cultivators. In Gamble's study of Ding Xian it was found that over 92 percent of peasant families owned some land, on average approximately 20 *mu* per family.[40] Rented land was farmed by 30 percent of the farming families, but only 4.8 percent were full tenants. The average return to the landlord was not more than 6 percent of the land value and cash and cash-crop rents

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[36] So, *The South China Silk District: Local Historical Transformation*, p. 142.

[37] Prazniak, "Tax Protest at Laiyang Shandong." pp. 41-71.

[38] Siu, *Agents and Victims*, pp. 84-87.

[39] Lucien Bianco, "Peasants and Revolution." *Journal of Peasant Studies* 3, No. 2, (1975), pp. 313-36.

[40] Gamble, *Ting Hsien: A North China Rural Community*, pp. 209-222.

averaged between 35 and 40 percent of the value of the harvest.[41] When the state claimed too much of the harvest, villagers mobilized to resist, organizing themselves to petition local authorities to end excessive illegal imposts. When the local authorities failed to remedy the situation, riots and rebellions often ensued.[42] Prazniak's account of a tax revolt in Shandong Province in 1910 gives a thorough description of the result of a spontaneous call for justice. What began as a petition to the county magistrate ended with a rebellion of peasants 100,000 strong.[43] Excessive taxation by merchant tax farmers violated the peasants' sense of fairness and threatened the order of their lives. The peasants organized themselves not because of ideological prompting but simply because they were trying to defend what they deemed to be theirs and to protect a way of life that was dear to them.

While tax rebellions, such as the one in Laiyang, illustrate peasant resistance to state intrusion on a large scale that reached beyond the local community, other types of peasant reaction to the absence (rather than the presence) of effective government took the form of village self-defence. To combat the danger of marauding bandits and soldiers, villagers fortified the perimeters of their village with walls and formed local militias to defend their territory.[44] In the village of Taitou, the village defense program required every family to take part in setting up defence lines around the village.[45] In Houxiazhai , when bandits

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41 Gamble, *Ting Hsien: A North China Rural Community*, pp. 11-12.

42 Tax riots were not a new activity in the north. However it was after the Opium War of 1842 that tax riots became more numerous. See Hsiao, *Rural China Imperial Control*, p. 441.

43 Although this tax revolt took place in 1910 it is representative of the process taken by northern peasants to deal with perceived injustices on the part of state representatives in the early Republican period (1911-1927). See Prazniak, "Tax Protest at Laiyang Shandong." pp. 41-71.

44 Perry, *Rebels and Revolutionaries in North China, 1845 -1945*, pp. 80-90.

45 Martin Yang,*A Chinese Village, Taitou, Shantung Province* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1948), p. 143.

started to harass the village the local school teacher, Liu Wenxin, who was a member of a secret society, the Red Spears, organized and taught the villagers methods of self-defense.[46] Secret societies like the Red Spears in the north were characterized by a militia tradition of self-defence with a heavy dose of religious inspiration. They were not ideologically driven organizations as were the Triads of the south with political ambitions, but were primarily defenders of the status quo. However, what may have started as self-defence often ended in rebellion against unfair state imposition.[47]

In the North China Plain, there was a variation in the amount of solidarity among villages with corresponding variations in the inability to organize successful self-defence.[48] Some villages such as Houxiazhai, mentioned above, are examples of strong solidarity and strong village self-defence. Other villages, like Shajing, suffered breakdowns in their social fabric: there was an absence of community-wide associations such as crop watching and self-defence. Huang puts the argument that the latter type of villages suffered extreme poverty. They were made up of owner-cultivators who had engaged in cash-cropping that was particularly vulnerable to recurrent flooding of nearby rivers. The combined effects of population pressure, natural disasters, commercialization and opportunities for urban employment resulted in many peasant farmers selling their lands and moving away. More often than not the new owners did not live in the village, and village solidarity was thereby weakened even further.[49] I suggest that peasants in Shajing were resorting to different forms of survival. Instead of coping collectively, peasants used survival tactics based on the economic peasant family. The absence of state

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[46] Huang, *The Peasant Economy and Social Change in North China* p. 262.

[47] Perry, *Rebels and Revolutionaries in North China, 1845-1945*, pp. 152-207.

[48] Huang, *The Peasant Economy and Social Change in North China*, pp. 262.

[49] Huang, *The Peasant Economy and Social Change in North China*, pp.264-274.

authority at a local level meant that social welfare like famine relief was not universally organized. In a poverty-stricken peasant household, some members would therefore work in the cities, while others would turn to smuggling and banditry to provide income for the family.[50] Individual peasant tactics of this type became so prevalent that bandit gangs, some numbering in the hundreds and thousands, were formed. In Shandong in 1925, for example, there were forty-seven major bandit chiefs with a total of more than seventeen thousand followers.[51]

The material of north China presented here confirms Bianco's contention that peasant reaction to taxation, bandit attacks, and poverty was not political in nature.[52] They were not attempting sociopolitical change but were concerned with household survival in the status quo. This situation did not apply to south China because peasants there were predominantly tenant farmers.

Chen Hanseng[53] noted in 1936 that more than 60% of the land under cultivation in the Pearl River Delta was rented from landlords. In the 69 villages of Panyu which Chen studied 77% of the peasantry were tenant families. The problems were compounded by the small size of the parcels of land under cultivation. Regardless of owner status, farmers in the south worked smaller parcels and, as Faure suggests, there were correspondingly fewer rich peasant farmers in the south than in the north.[54] A key characteristic of the south was

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50 Perry,*Rebels and Revolutionaries n North China, 1845-1945*, pp. 60-62.

51 *Ibid.*, p. 66.

52 Bianco, "Peasants and Revolution." pp. 313-36

53 Chen Hanseng, *Agrarian Problems in Southernmost China.* (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1936), pp. 30-1.

54 David Faure, *The Rural Economy of Pre-Liberation China Trade Expansion and Peasant Livelihood in Jiangsu and Guangdong, 1870 to 1937* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp.168-170.

the high concentration of landholdings. Vast amounts of land were held in corporate ownership in forms such as clan lands and corporate alliances. For example, the Wanqingsha lineage of Dongguan held 67,000 *mu* of land in the early 1900s. These extensive tracts of land were divided into small parcels and rented to tenant farmers with lineage members usually having priority.

Because land was far more fertile here, the relationship between landlord and tenant was complicated by a system of land tenure peculiar to the south. Tenants had the right to permanent tenancy, or what became known as the right to the 'top-soil', while the landlord owned the 'bottom-soil'. This right of permanent tenancy enabled a tenant farmer to derive an income from a certain parcel of land for as long as he[55] wished, provided the rent was paid. If rents fell into arrears, the tenant farmer would still retain the right to tenancy unless the arrears became greater than the worth of the land. Furthermore, a tenant farmer had the right to sub-let the top-soil or the land to another farmer thereby becoming a landlord himself. During the years under discussion the practicing of sub-leasing land was widespread with tenant farmers subletting part of the lands to others who themselves might then sublet, thus creating multiple layers of tenants and landlords. This complex web led to high rents with the actual tillers of the soil paying up to 71% of their harvest in rents and additional charges.[56]

This system of land tenure was most predominant in 'the sands' (shatian) -- a vast reclaimed tract of land created by both sediment deposits by the Pearl River and by reclaiming coastal land from the sea. By the 1930s there was an estimated 4,000,000 *mu*

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[55] The use of "he" in this context is gender specific because of the rule of law during this period which prohibited landownership by females. See Kay Ann Johnson, *Women, the Family and Peasant Revolution in China.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

[56] Chen Hanseng, *Agrarian Problems in Southernmost China.* (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1936), pp. 30-1.

of new land in the Pearl River Delta,[57] reclaimed by "the people of the sands"[58], who were considered to be at the bottom of the social stratum. This land was controlled by corporate managers who sub rented it to the cultivators.[59]

This intricate web of landlord-tenant relations was severely affected by the extractive early Republican state. Political leadership in Guangdong was unlike that of the north with power deriving from "the barrel of the gun". With the disintegration of the central state, the province came to be ruled from 1913 until 1941 by a succession of warlords . Provincial, county and village levels of government in Guangdong all sought revenue to finance the new power structures, and the increasing local state demands led to greater pressure being placed on landlords to collect rents in order to pay taxes. Although there was not an extraordinary increase in the rates during this period, landlords had become far less benevolent. In the past, during years of poor harvests caused by poor weather conditions or some other natural calamity, a rent reduction would have been in order. This practice was discontinued during the early years of the Republic, because landlords were under great pressure by the local state to pay taxes.[60]

Studies of the Pearl River Delta show great variation in the impact of local state

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57 Faure, *The Rural Economy of Pre-Liberation China Trade Expansion*, p. 189.

58 Many of "the people of the sands" were of tanka origin. See Siu, *Agents and Victims,* pp. 36-39.

59 Siu, *Agents and Victims,* p.38

60 Marks, *Rural Revolution in South China Peasants* .

extraction. Some areas, such as Xinhui[61] and Kaiping[62] did not experience a breakdown in social organization. In these regions, lineage cohesion remained strong and lineage leaders continued to act on behalf of their communities in dealing with the state. Although a degree of civil disorder was felt in these areas, local leadership under the direction of the 'new gentry' was able to maintain control and also increase the region's prosperity. Both Xinhui and Kaiping were part of the *siyi*, in which poor peasants could earn a living by sojourning in Southeast Asia and North America. This might have been a safety valve for peasants facing the extractive local state. In addition, frequent remittances were sent home to the villages and the lineage. These remittances became an important source of revenue for the village which could be used for welfare. The influence which overseas lineage members had over the lineage organization can also explain why the lineage was able to hold loyalty of the peasants, thereby preventing them from joining secret societies or active peasant associations.

On the other hand peasants in Haifeng, Shunde and Panyu did experience a breakdown in social organization and, consequently formed separate associations. Lineages that had acted as the cohesive mechanism between landlords and tenants in village society thus became ineffectual. Tenants turned to class organizations such as secret societies and political associations in order to deal with increasing pressure from landlords. For example, in Haifeng tenant farmers organized into peasant associations and rebelled against landlords and the local government when there were no reductions after a typhoon destroyed a great portion of the 1923 harvest. In Shunde, similar strategies were used in the early 1920s. There, the lineage system had ceased to exist and the peasants were left without any system of welfare. Ruthless warlords demanded rent before the harvest and used crop watching associations to create revenue for themselves. When silk prices fell in

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61 Siu, *Agents and Victims.*

62 Yuen-fong Woon, *Social Organization in South China, 1911-1949. The case of the Kuan Lineage in K'ai-p'ing County* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, The University of Michigan, 1984), pp. 52-72.

the 1920s and the indebted peasants were subjected to higher usury rates, a crisis was reached.[63] The peasants reacted by joining associations which were organized by the CCP members in 1923, and they engaged in violent rebellions.

The cases of Haifeng and Shunde were not isolated occurrences in Guangdong. Many peasants living in communities in which the old social order had disintegrated turned to other forms of social organizations such as secret societies.[64] Kulp's observations of Phenix Village in 1919 suggest that non-kinship associations arose out of the failure of the family group to cope with the needs of the poorer members. When lineage networks failed other associations replaced them.[65] Secret societies, such as the *Tiandihui* or Triad Society,[66] had first emerged as mutual-aid associations but had become politically oriented during the last years of the Qing. They involved themselves in insurrectionary activities in a "centripetal" fashion. They drew upon their membership in the villages and towns, combining village militias and clan-feud bands into a formidable force and then lay siege to the cities.[67] Hsieh's research of the 1911 revolutionary activities in Waizhou show secret societies did help organize peasants to become involved in political uprisings that were

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[63] So, *The South China Silk District*, pp. 146-148.

[64] Sheridan, *China In Disintegration*, p. 104.

[65] Daniel Kulp, *Country Life in South China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1925), p. 214.

[66] Past research has suggested that the Triad Secret Society had formed as an anti-Qing movement as is suggested by their popular slogan, "Overthrowing the Qing and restoring the Ming" but new research materials from the Archives of Taiwan suggest that the Triads, as with other secret societies started as a mutual-aid society directly linked to socioeconomic circumstances and migration patterns of China's lower classes. The two roles played by the early societies was to provide protection and introductions for members. See Dian Murray, "Migration, Protection, and Racketeering: The Spread of the Tiandihui within China." David Ownby and Mary Somers Heidhues (eds.) *"Secret Societies" Reconsidered Perspective on the Social History of Modern South China and Southeast Asia* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), pp. 177-189.

[67] Winston Hsieh, "Triads, Salt Smugglers, and Local Uprisings: Observations on the Social and Economic Background of the Waichow Revolution of 1911." Jean Chesneaux (ed.) *Popular Movements and Secret Societies in China 1840-1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972), pp. 145-164.

designed to do more than protect their own communities.

Equally widespread in Guangdong were the peasant associations organized during the period of the First United Front between the KMT and the CCP (1923-27). These offered avenues of collective resistance against unjust rents and other unfair practices of warlords and state officials. However, beneath this banner, there was a distinct political message. Slogans, such as "down with imperialism, down with feudalism, down with warlords, down with local bullies and evil gentry"[68] were social in nature and much more oriented to change the political system under the ideal of ending injustice once and for all.[69]

In conclusion, the reaction of north China peasants to state intrusion differed from that of their southern counterparts. The reason for this lay at least partly in their different relationships to the land - ownership in the north and tenancy in the south. Northern peasant farmers were, for the most part, small-owners with much to lose by a breaking down of community cohesion. They suffered from oppressive direct taxation and fought to retain what was theirs. Circumstances were different in the south where the peasants were predominantly tenant farmers who felt the effects of heavy taxation through the issue of rents. As the social fabric came apart during the republican years, tenant farmers had nothing to lose by political action, for there was little to defend.

The success of peasant survival tactics varied among both northern and southern villages. Some village communities were able to strongly resist unfair state taxation while others were less than successful. There was also variation in villagers' desire and ability to engage in resistance. Villages that had a large amount of overseas immigration were able to retain social cohesion and withstand undue state intrusion. In other villages where the

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[68] So, *The South China Silk District,* pp. 213-214.

[69] *Ibid.* pp. 146-7.

social fabric had disintegrated peasants turned to political associations and secret societies to bring about change. It would appear that state-peasant society relations took different forms depending on the area under examination. The variations extended beyond north - south comparisons and include more local regional discrepancies.

Chapter Three: Nationalist Era 1927-1949

This chapter focuses on the state-peasant society relationship during the unstable Nationalist period (1927-1949). Since the focus of my thesis is on north and south China, I shall omit discussion of communist-held territory in Jiangxi (1927-1934) and Yan'an (1936-1949). I shall first describe the varying ability of the GMD and Japanese puppet state in projecting themselves, including through experiments in local self government, reintroducing the *baojia* system, attempting to reduce rent, recentralizing tax collection, forcibly conscripting men for military purposes, and imposing the use of hybrid cotton seeds on peasants. This will be followed by an analysis of rural community reactions,based on Skinner's typology of open and closed communities.[1]

During the last years of the 1910s China was a disjointed collection of regions controlled by various warlords. The central state had lost whatever power it had once held. The disintegration of China as a whole was well under way. Seeking a path to reunification, the GMD formed an alliance with the CCP in 1923. Together they mounted a military expedition to capture the power bases of the warlords. After the Nanjing Regime was established in 1927, and the CCP had been driven into the political wilderness, the Nationalist government repeatedly sent its army into both warlord-held and Communist-held territory[2] in attempts to reunite the country by military means. Counterattacks by the warlords were frequent. Although these were often unsuccessful, the continual challenges by regional militarists prevented the Nationalists from ever attaining anything like complete

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[1] Skinner, "Chinese Peasants and the Closed Community." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 13, No. 3, (1971), pp. 270-281.

[2] The First United Front ended in 1927 after the tricity region of Wuhan had been successfully taken over by the United Front Nationalist Revolutionary Army. After this conquest, Chiang Kai-Shek turned the Nationalist military forces on the Communists forcing the CCP underground. This was the end of the First United Front. In October 1934, the CCP carried out the 'Long March' from Jiangxi to Yan'an to escape the Nationalists' extermination campaigns. See Spence, *The Search For Modern China*, pp. 341-354.

control. In Guangdong for example, Guangzhou continued until 1936 to be ruled by the warlord Chen Jitang. As Robert Bedeski and others point out, up until Japanese full-scale invasion, the only area completely under the Nationalists' control was the central Yangzi region.[3] This lack of national unity prevented the Nationalist state from applying its policies with any degree of uniformity throughout the country.

From their base in Manchuria, the Japanese invaded China in July 1937. By 1938, they had overrun coastal China and forced the Nationalists to retreat up the Yangzi. A puppet state, eventually headed by Wang Jingwei in Nanjing, was set up then by the Japanese. The Nationalists, having signed the 2nd United Front with the CCP in 1936, set up their headquarters in Chongqing. Between 1937 and 1945, China was divided into three parts: the Japanese held territory, the GMD held territory, and the CCP held territory, with a few warlords still in control at the periphery. Even within the GMD and Japanese held territory, the reach of the state was often not deep. Except for the CCP held area, the local leaders farther away from the cities and the major transportation routes remained semi-independent. When the Japanese occupation ended in 1945 the Nationalists attempted to assert their authority over the whole country and civil war broke out between the Nationalists and the Communists.

Possibly owing to the constant upheavals and warfare, this period is one of the most under-researched in China's recent history. Scholars focusing on rural areas in the north and northeast have been fortunate in having the Mantetsu Surveys from which to draw their data. There are, however, limitations to the use of the Mantetsu Surveys that should be acknowledged if this resource is to be used. These surveys were carried out by conquerors for their colonial administration which precluded a certain amount of objectivity

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[3] Bedeski, Robert (1981) *State-Building In Modern China: The Kuomintang in the Prewar Period* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California Press, 1981), pp. 48-49.

no matter what the intentions were of the individual researchers.[4] Not all investigators gained equal access to information. In some communities the Japanese surveyors were welcomed while in others peasant hostilities prevented detailed studies from being made.[5] In the south, where no such extensive sociological surveys were made, many gaps remain in the literature. The National Reconstruction Committee and the Land Commission did conduct national surveys on behalf of the GMD during this period but inconsistencies prevailed. Surveys dealing with cultivated acreage often resembled tax-registers which left surveyors with under-reported statistics.[6] As a result, most of my information on the Pearl River Delta in South China comes from regional ethnographic studies rather than large-scale surveys.

Once, the Nationalists under Chiang Kai-Shek had, to some extent, consolidated power in central and coastal China in 1927, they set about devising a system of centralized government.[7] Following Sun Yat-sen's party platform, the Nationalists laid out three stages of constitutional development: the first a period of military administration, the second political tutelage, and the third stage the full development of democratic government. However, they never moved beyond the second stage. The system of elected assemblies at each level of government - central, provincial, county, and district - never was put into universal practice. In the period under review, the central state was run as a one party dictatorship in many ways similar to the Leninist state in the post-1949 period.

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[4] See Noma Kiyoshi "Chugoku noson kanko chosa' no kikaku to jissseki- Chugoku mondai kenkyu ni okeru shukanteki 'zen i' to sono genkai" (The Intentions and actual results of the *Investigation of Customary Practices in Rural China*: subjective 'goodwill' and its limitations in the study of the China problem), *Rekishi hyoron*, 170, (1964), pp. 1-15.

[5] See Huang, *The Peasant Economy and Social Change in North China*, pp. 39-40.

[6] Faure, *The Rural Economy of Pre-Liberation China Trade Expansion and Peasant Livelihood in Jiangsu and Guangdong, 1870-1937*, pp. 45-46.

[7] Tung, *The Political Institutions of Modern China*, pp. 118-123.

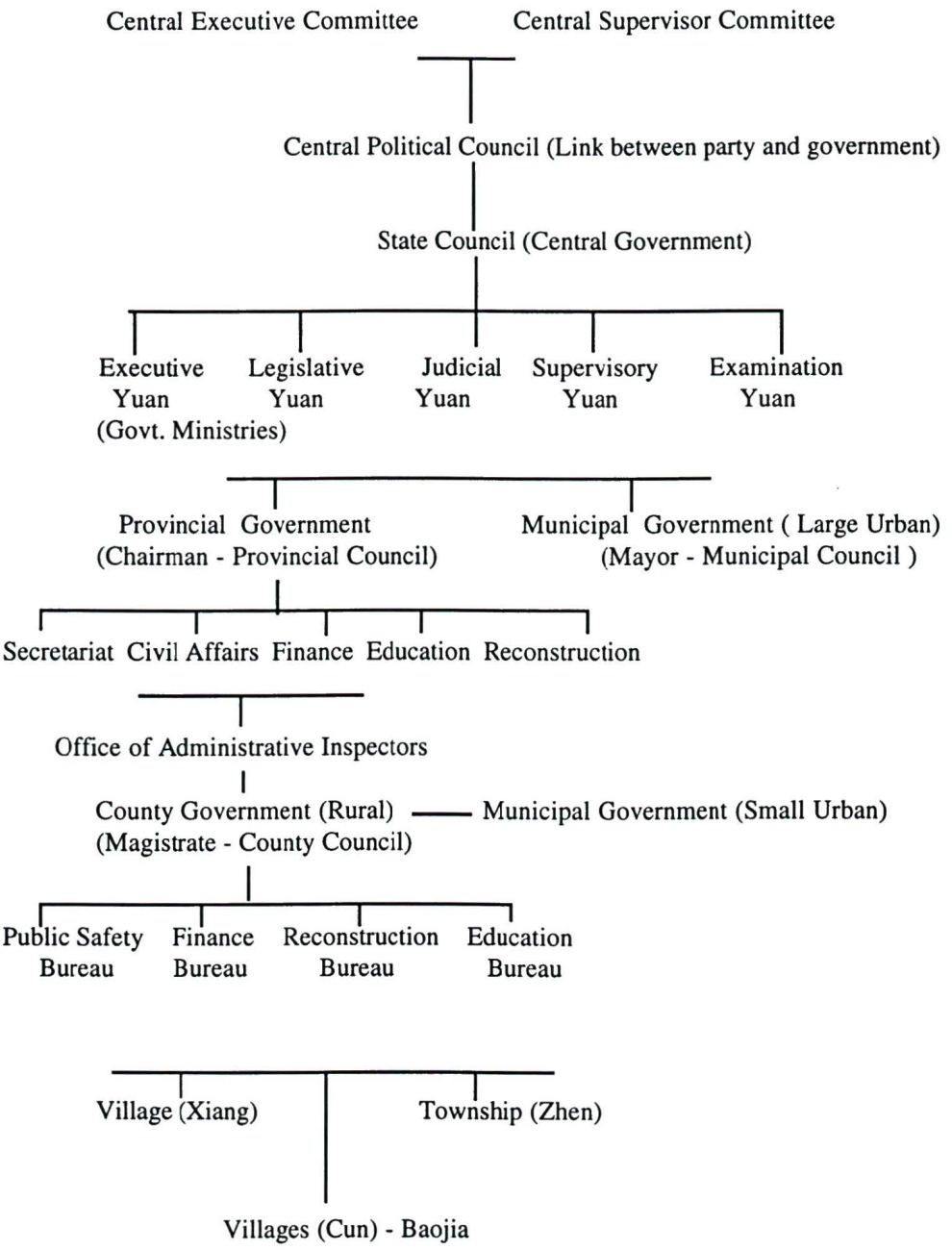
There was no actual separation between party and government. On paper, as one sees in Fig. 2., the two top bodies in the administrative hierarchy of the National Government, the Central Supervisory Committee and the Central Executive Committee shared the same rank. The Central Supervisory Committee was composed of the top GMD party authority, while the Central Executive Committee was made up of top government officials. Both sat together in the Central Political Council. Because of overlapping membership between the Central Supervisory Committee and the Central Executive Committee, the Central Political Council actually merged party and government power.

Under the Central Political Council were the five Yuans. The Executive Yuan looked after the government ministries and carried out laws made by the Legislative Yuan. The Legislative Yuan made and revised laws. The Judicial Yuan supervised judicial administration, disciplined officials, and adjudicated legal cases. The Examining Yuan conducted examinations and determined the qualifications for entry in the public service. It also reviewed the efficiency records of functionaries in all central, provincial and local government offices. The Supervisory Yuan exercised the power of impeachment and that of auditing.

As already noted, representatives of the central state were never democratically elected. During the period of "political tutelage", all state councillors and Yuan heads were chosen by the Central Executive Committee. This gave the Nationalist party chiefs supreme authority. The same was true of the local state. As can be seen from Fig. 2., both the provincial and municipal governments were directly under the Executive Yuan.[8] They were each administered by a council chairman appointed by the central government. The council was usually made up of seven to nine members with one member designated as chairman. All members were forbidden to hold concurrent administrative posts in other

[8] The municipalities were created to administer areas of high population and concentrated urbanization. There were two categories of municipal government. The first was directly under the Executive Yuan. It had the same status as a province and was headed by a mayor and a council. The second category had the same status as a county.

Fig.2. Administrative Structure of the Nationalist Government (1929 - 1949)



Source: Tung,William. The Political Institutions of Modern China. Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1964. pp. 119 - 138.

provinces, and no council member could be a military officer on active service. The council supervised the execution of all matters entrusted to it by the central government, including supervising local self-government, preparing budget and financial statements, the appointment and dismissal of officials, and the promulgation of rules and regulations. It also oversaw the movement of the national army units within its jurisdiction and dealt with any other matters deemed necessary. Although the Provincial council dealt with important issues it was chiefly a body of deliberation.[9] The real administration of provincial or municipal affairs was the responsibility of the chairmen of the various departments and the secretariat-general. Most provincial and municipal governments had four departments: civil affairs, finance, education and reconstruction.[10] They also had a secretariat which dealt with all matters outside the jurisdiction of the departments. Ministries within the Executive Yuan supervised the respective provincial and municipal departments. The chairman of each department was chosen by the central government from amongst the provincial or municipal council members. The secretariat-general was also chosen by the central government.

The relationship between the central state and the provincial or municipal government has been characterised as clientalist.[11] It largely depended on the *guanxi* between the chairman of the provincial council and the central government minister. As the central government had the power to override any rule or regulation proposed by a provincial or municipal council, good relations between the provincial chairman and central government leaders were crucial to the well-being and political clout of the leadership in

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[9] Tung, *The Political Institutions of Modern China*, pp. 140-142.

[10] Some provinces had additional departments such as industry. See Tung, *The Political Institutions of Modern China*, p. 141.

[11] For a thorough definition of clientalism see Oi, *State and Peasant in Contemporary China The Political Economy of Village Government*, pp. 7-10.

any province or municipality.

The next level of government was the county or small urban municipality, headed by a magistrate or mayor who was assisted by four bureaus (public safety, finance, reconstruction and education). County or small urban municipality government was administered by a council composed of magistrate, or mayor, and bureau chiefs. The functions of the county council were similar to those of the provincial council. Although nominations for bureau chiefs came from the magistrate's office, they were chosen ultimately by the province. Consequently, the political clout of a bureau chief might equal or surpass that of the magistrate, a situation that could lead to potential conflicts within the council.[12]

To oversee the affairs of the county and small urban municipal governments, the Office of Administrative Inspector was established by the central government. This office acted as an auxiliary organ of the provincial government in county or municipal level administration. It was concerned with reviewing county or municipal programs; examining county or municipal budgets, financial reports, rules and regulations; supervising local administration and overseeing local functionaries. It also convened administrative conferences, settled disputes among counties, and carried out the orders of the provincial government.[13] Usually the administrative inspector was also the commander of the local security forces. This served to prevent county governments from becoming too powerful vis-a-vis the provinces and central state.

Much as within the central and provincial government levels, the principles of

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[12] Philip Kuhn, "Local Taxation and Finance in Republican China." In *Select Papers from the Center for Far Eastern Studies* Susan Mann Jones, (ed.), Chicago: Center for Far Eastern Studies, University of Chicago. p. 122.

[13] Tung, *The Political Institutions of Modern China*, p. 143.

democratic government were discussed but never enacted at the county and municipal levels. County assemblies were formed in some provinces, but they were appointed bodies and not created through elections. The 1946 Constitution stipulated that provinces and counties had the right to to form assemblies if they chose but this was a far cry from democratic representation.[14]

Under the county was the newly created sub-district (*qu*), an intermediate level of government that fell between the county and the village (*xiang*) and market town (*zhen*). The establishment of the sub-district (*qu*) was at the option of the county concerned. It consisted of a purportedly representative body of people led by a chief who was appointed by the provincial government. The responsibilities of the sub-district (*qu*) included the promotion of education, the construction of roads, and assistance to health, relief, and security. During the war, militia training was also part of the sub-district's (*qu*) functions.[15] The new *qu* government was a departure from the organization of the Qing and warlord regimes as it brought the state one level closer to rural life.

As mentioned above, below the *qu* were the designated administrative villages (*xiang*)[16] and townships (*zhen*). Although they were not formal levels of government, every now and then, county chiefs might appoint chiefs to a *xiang* in order to project their power and to collect taxes. In time, some *xiang* chiefs oversaw an area that encompassed approximately forty natural villages. In this sense, the reach of the state was deeper than

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[14] Tung, *The Political Institutions of Modern China*, p. 211.

[15] *Ibid.* p. 193.

[16] The word "*xiang*" is used in this context to mean an administrative village as opposed to a natural village which is designated as "*cun*". The difference between *xiang* and *cun* was in size and bureaucratic organization. The *xiang* was a designated level of bureaucratic administration that encompassed a large size village and was at the same administrative level as that of the township or "*zhen*". See Woon, *Social Organization In South China*, p. 15.

during the Qing or the warlord period.[17]

With regards to the natural villages (*cun*) the GMD government did not designate an official leader for each village when it first came to power. Traditional village elders and even political bosses became *de facto* unofficial leaders from time to time. However, in 1932, to fulfil the functions of social control and public security, the Nationalists resurrected the *baojia* system at the village level.[18] This eventually became an instrument for rooting out Communist agents and sympathizers. Leadership of the *baojia* was not a simple matter. During the Qing dynasty, the role of official leader (or *bao-cheng*) had been undertaken by well-respected poor or middle peasants who acted on behalf of the state. However, they were never powerful because the village's unofficial leaders among the gentry would exert a good deal of influence over them. Under the Nationalists, the *bao-cheng* was given more backing by the government, but many peasants and gentry refused to serve. As a result, in some communities, such as Shajing in the North China Plain, the role was filled by "local bullies" who used the position to exploit the villagers and extort resources from them for personal gain.[19] The Japanese continued with the *baojia* system when they occupied South China in the late 1930s. Under them the *baojia* was controlled by local militia, police corps and soldiers.

Scholars seem to agree that the *baojia* system was less effective in south China than in the north.[20] This was perhaps because in south China, village communities were far

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17 Huang, *Peasant Economy and Social Change In North China*, p. 291.

18 Yang, "A Chinese Village In Early Communist Tradition." p. 103.

19 Huang, *The Peasant Economy and Social China In North China*, p. 268.

20 Ramon Myers,*The Chinese Peasant Economy, Agricultural Development in Hopei and Shantung, 1890-1949* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970). Fei Xiaotong,*Peasant Life in China: A Field Study of Country Life in the Yangtze Valley* (New York: Dutton, 1939). Woon, *Social Organization in South China, 1911-1949: The Case of the Kuan Lineage in Kaiping County.*

more commercialized and stratified.. In addition, much of the land was held as ancestral trusts, which were rented to villagers.[21] Unofficial leaders who acted as managers of these ancestral trusts, were still able to exercise tremendous power over tenant farmers. It was therefore very difficult for a formal leader such as the *bao-cheng* to exert authority over these unofficial lineage leaders. In north China by contrast small-owner cultivators were a majority, and the unofficial power structure was more loosely organized. The lineages were not the powerful institutions that they were in south China. They served more as conductors of appropriate ritual behaviour than as economic power holders.[22] In addition, unlike the case in southern villages, non-lineage members were incorporated into fictive kinship groups and eventually accepted into the lineage.[23] Newcomers were not precluded from becoming leaders, a far cry from the practice in southern villages where lineage membership was vital.[24] As a result, the *bao-cheng*, with the backing of the state, were able to exert power over the lineage structure. On the whole, the effectiveness of the baojia system in both north and south China depended on the strength of the central state. In places not under direct control of the GMD or the Japanese puppet state, the baojia system only existed in name. For example, in Guangdong the *baojia* was not instituted until the Japanese came to occupy the area in 1942.[25] In some northern areas, the baojia

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[21] Rubie Watson, "Corporate Property and Local Leadership in the Pearl River Delta 1898-1941." Joseph Esherick and Mary Backus Rankin (eds.) *Chinese Local Elites and Patterns of Dominance*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp.239-260.

[22] Huang, *Peasant Economy and Social Change In North China*, p. 260.

[23] Huang, *Peasant Economy and Social Change In North China*,p. 261.

[24] Prasajit Duara,"Elites and the Structures of Authority in the Villages of North China, 1900-1949." In Joseph Esherick and Mary Backus Rankin (eds.) *Chinese Local Elites and Patterns of Dominance*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp.261-279.

[25] Woon, *Social Organization In South China.*

did not appear until 1939.[26]

The Rent Reduction Law was, like the system of *baojia,* another example of policies and laws that suffered from irregular implementation.[27] Following Sun Yatsen's principle of "land to the tiller," the Nanjing government tried to impose a rent ceiling of not exceeding 37.5% of the harvest on the landlords. However, no matter how good its intentions, the law was filled with ambiguities because it did not take into account different types of tenancy in China. In addition, such a law was difficult to implement because county government officials were not motivated reformers. In many cases, politically powerful landlords successfully defied the law by withholding land taxes as a protest against rent reduction. Consequently, peasants failed to benefit from the "land to the tiller" program.[28] In Guangdong, for example, tenant farmers reportedly continued to give up 75% of their harvests as rent.[29] The only province which gave a trial to the Rent Reduction Law was Zhejiang, (Chiang Kai-shek's home province) and even there success varied.

In the matter of taxation, the Nanjing government tried at times to contain the fiscal power of the provinces and the counties. As mentioned in the previous chapter, during the early Republican period (1911-1927), the land tax, traditionally a tax controlled by the central state, had been labelled as a "local tax", and put under provincial jurisdiction of local

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[26] Myers, *The Chinese Peasant Economy, Agricultural Development in Hopei and Shantung.*

[27] See Noel Miner, "Agrarian Reform in Nationalist China: The Case of Rent Reduction in Chekiang, 1927-1937." F. Gilbert Chan (ed.) *China at the Crossroads: Nationalists and Communists, 1927-1949,* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1980), pp. 69-90.

[28] Miner reports that in the areas where landlords actively lobbied against rent reduction the disputes often resulted in tenants having to pay an even greater amount in rents than previously. See Miner, "Agrarian Reform in Nationalist China: The Case of Rent Reduction in Chekiang.

[29] Chen, *Agrarian Problems in Southernmost China.*, pp. 22-30.

warlords. In other words, the provinces were empowered to collect the land tax and use the income for provincial expenditures. For their part, the county officials or warlords collected surcharges of all kinds from the peasants and used these as income.[30]

After coming to power, the Nationalist government sought to redress this lack of fiscal control by experimenting with new bureaucratic structures. In 1928, 'licensing bureaus'[31] were created to handle all county-level taxes and surcharges. Unlike other county bureaux, this bureau chief was directly appointed by the central government. A county official or warlord was not allowed to devise and apply a new surcharge or tax arbitrarily without the institutional blessing of the centrally-controlled licensing bureau. However, using their guanxi with the central government, the provincial governments often neutralized this control by placing their proteges in the licensing bureau. The Nationalist government also allowed provincial departments, such as education and reconstruction, to set up regional bureaux which competed with the licensing bureaus for tax monies. As a result, the Nanjing government was still unable to centralize tax collection in the 1930s.[32] The licensing bureaus were thus eventually abolished in 1934, and their duties were absorbed by the finance bureau directly under the county magistrate.

Another attempt by the central government to capture fiscal control was the establishment of the Financial Affairs Committee. Local gentry members were selected by the central government as watch dogs to inspect the administration of county finance bureaux, particularly with regards to the collection and disbursement of county revenue.

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[30] The land tax surcharge was not allowed to exceed the amount of the land tax . As expenses increased, special levies and additional surcharges were applied that had a crippling effect on the peasantry. Huang *Peasant Economy and Social Change In North China*, p. 279.

[31] For a thorough discussion of Licensing Bureaux see Kuhn, "Local Taxation and Finance In Republican China." pp. 122-25.

[32] Kuhn, "Local Taxation and Finance in Republican China." p. 124.

However, as watch dogs they did not prove effective because the Financial Affairs Committee members were not permitted to intervene directly in these matters and were supposed to work through the office of the magistrate. By 1935, this experiment in "ruling the gentry through the gentry" was also discarded.[33]

Regardless of which levels of government were collecting taxes in the 1930s, the peasants suffered at the hands of ruthless tax collectors. Though the Nationalist state tried to do away with the old brokerage system[34] and the tax farming system, such attempts were generally unsuccessful because of a serious shortage of modern-trained financial managers. As in the past, local power holders, often brokers and tax farmers, continued to resist taxation themselves while passing the tax burden on to the peasants. They also pocketed much of the tax revenue, so that it never reached the government.[35] In Shunyi county, north China, for example, tax registration and collection had long been farmed out to a number of private agencies called *lianfang* . A tax farmer working for such an enterprise could derive a substantial income of between 200 to 500 yuan annually, income that was skimmed off the top of the tax revenue.[36] In the Pearl River Delta, tax farming still existed and extraction of extortionate taxes and surcharges continued during the 1930s and 1940s.[37]

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[33] *Ibid.* pp. 124-25.

[34] See Susan Mann Jones, "The Organization of Trade at the County Level: Brokerage And Tax Farming In The Republican Period." Susan Mann Jones, ed., *Select Papers from the Center for Far Eastern Studies.* (Chicago: Center for Far Eastern Studies, University of Chicago, 1979).

[35] Kuhn, "Local Taxation and Finance in Republican China." pp. 127-130.

[36] Huang, *Peasant Economy and Social Change In North China*, p. 286.

[37] See Woon, *Social Organization In South China*, pp. 73-75 and Siu, *Agents and Victims*, pp. 104-108.

Peasants were not only hit by heavy fiscal burden, but they were also forcibly recruited as soldiers in the many military conflicts during the Nationalist era, the period of Japanese conquest, and the civil war in the immediate postwar period. In 1933, in the hopes of eradicating arbitrary enlistment, the GMD government introduced a formal system of conscription. The idea was that conscripts would be drawn from a specified geographical area assigned to a particular military unit. The new system, however proved to be as burdensome for the peasants as the irregular and sporadic conscription practices during the warlord era.[38] By 1941, in the height of anti-Japanese resistance, the GMD government divided the whole country into 15 "army controlled areas" and 109 "division controlled areas".[39] Each division controlled area was to supply the army with a quota of manpower. As with many other central state policies, the linchpin of the conscription process was the local county official in the public safety bureau, who had neither the skill nor the desire to put the conscription policy into fair practice. Those who were supposed to be exempt from enlistment, such as underage children, were often conscripted. Others, such as wealthy landowners who should have been recruited, paid men to serve in their stead. Favouritism was rife; public safety bureau chiefs would profit from their positions by selling exemptions. As a result, the majority of recruits were from the poorest households, those who could least afford to leave their families and farms for military duty.[40] Apart from economic sufferings, this process had significant sociological implications. Up until this time, only the poorest of poor women in south China had worked the family farms. The massive recruitment of able-bodied males into the military in the 1940s, in all likelihood, forced many peasant women into farm labour to keep their

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[38] Lloyd Eastman, "Nationalist China during the Sino-Japanese War 1937-1945." In Lloyd Eastman, Jerome Ch'en, Suzanne Pepper and Lyman P. Van Slyke (eds.) *The Nationalist Era in China 1927-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 151.

[39] Hsi-Sheng Ch'i *Nationalist China at War. Military Defeat and Political Collapse, 1937-45* , (Ann Arbour: University of Michigan Press, 1982), p. 161.

[40] Hsi-Sheng Ch'i, *Nationalist China at War. Military Defeat and Political Collapse, 1937-45* , p. 162.

families from starvation.[41]

When the Nationalist government assumed central power in 1928 it focused on building up China's economy. Modernization through industrialization was seen as the answer to China's backwardness. This belief led the central government to promote the growing of various cash crops as raw materials for industries. One such crop was cotton, which was in great demand by the Chinese and foreign owned cotton mills[42] in the early 1930s. Chinese strains of cotton were coarse, however, and not as desirable for machine spinning and weaving as those grown elsewhere, particularly in the United States. The central government therefore adopted a policy of actively promoting the growing of American hybrid cotton to produce a finer thread that could be blended with its rough Chinese counterpart. To enforce the use of these hybrid seeds, the government refused to give loans to cotton farmers unless such seed was used. Outsider experts were sent into communities to set up societies to disseminate knowledge of the hybrid seed, encourage adoption, and provide a secure supply of seed.[43] They established experiment and extension stations to teach local farmers to adapt the hybrid seeds to suit local conditions. These cotton societies[44] were organized at the county, rather than the subdistrict (*xiang*) or

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[41] See Lloyd Eastman, *Seeds of Destruction Nationalist China In War and Revolution 1937-1949*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984), p. 49. for a description of the labour shortage in the countryside during this period as a result of military conscription.

[42] Foreign owned cotton mills refer to the Japanese and European mills that were operating in China during the 1920s and 1930s. These mills were seen as a potential buyer of domestically grown cotton. See Richard Kraus,*Cotton and Cotton Goods in China 1918-1936* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1980).

[43] Kenneth Pomeranz,*The Making of a Hinterland: State, Society and Economy in Inland North China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

[44] Membership into a cotton society usually involved owning a certain amount of land that was being used for American seed strain cotton production. Membership, therefore, tended to be the relatively prosperous members of a community. Shandong abandoned this exclusionary requirement when the provincial government allowed the membership of all cotton growers in the cotton societies. This reversal of policy came at the late date of 1939. See Pomeranz, *The Making of a Hinterland*, pp. 88-101.

village (*cun*) level, and they did not rely on village solidarity to function successfully. However, they encountered concerted opposition from the poor villagers because the new American seed strains were late in ripening, and this caused problems for those trying to glean cotton fields.[45]

Traditionally, in north China, gleaning was an important means of livelihood for impoverished landless peasants. It involved the rights of the poor to go into fields to forage for leftovers. In the case of a cotton field, left over cotton tufts could be used as padding in bedding and clothing. Leaves could be used as fuel against the winter cold. To satisfy such basic needs, a gleaner needed 16 to 25 days in the fields way before the onset of winter. This could not be done in fields that had adopted the late ripening American seed. In facing disputes between the landowners and the gleaners, cotton societies often sided with the landowners and employed local militia to evict the gleaners.[46]They even tried to persuade the government to abolish gleaning altogether and did succeed to do so in some Shandong counties.[47] Fortunately for the gleaners, the influence of the cotton societies was not universal and did not extend to all cotton growing villages. In southwest Shandong for example, only 5% of the land was under cotton cultivation, and community leaders did not favour cash cropping or the use of American seed. They viewed commercial cotton growing as a threat to their power and were unwilling to encourage a departure from past agricultural practices .[48] Without their participation in the setting up of cotton societies and in dealing harshly with local gleaners, it was not possible for the central or local state to impose its will.

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[45] Gleaning was designed as a concession to the impoverished which enabled poor peasants to rake over harvested fields to collect the remaining shaft and grain.

[46] Pomeranz, *The Making of a Hinterland*, pp. 96-97.

[47] *Ibid*, pp. 88-101.

[48] Pomeranz, *The Making of a Hinterland*, pp. 96-97.

To analyze the reactions of the peasant communities to outside oppression during the turbulent Nationalist period, I now will consider William Skinner's typology of "open" and "closed" communities. Skinner argues that historically during times of endemic disorder, such as during dynastic decline, peasant communities protected themselves by closing off economically and normatively from the world outside. Once order was restored, such as at the height of a dynastic rule, closed communities opened up and restored contact with the larger society. Skinner maintains that this cycle was dependent upon economic, political and social factors at various moments.[49]

Skinner usefully applied the construct of "open" and "closed" communities to traditional Chinese peasant society under dynastic rule. However in considering this typology for the Nationalist period, I find it does not fit. As the above descriptions indicate, peasants in both north and south China at this time suffered incrementally from increased taxation, arbitrary surcharges, increased military recruitment, and other impositions of the state and yet not all communities were closed.[50] It might be, however, useful to distinguish between "open communities" "closed communities" and "disintegrated communities" which coexisted during the same time. In north China, some communities, particularly those close to transport routes and major cities, such as Sibeichai in the heart of the cotton-growing region, were "opened" to outside influences in the 1930s and 1940s. The lucrative cotton industry had brought many urban investors to the area. Peasants

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[49]Skinner's hypothesis is based upon work pioneered by Eric Wolf, "Closed corporate peasant communities in Mesoamerica and Central Java." *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Spring, 1957) 1-18. Skinner, "Chinese Peasants and the Closed Community." pp. 270-281.

[50] Rambo's study of north and south Vietnamese communities during the period of 1945-54 also fails to find all communities closing up in face of conditions of guerrilla warfare. Some Vietnamese villagers did take up arms and defend their borders much the same way as peasants in Houxiazhai which would follow Skinner's idea of coercive closure. Other Vietnamese settlements that were open during times of peace and prosperity remained open despite coercive forces simply because they were unable to close. A. Terry Rambo, "Closed Corporate and Open Peasant Communities: Reopening a Hastily Shut Case." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 19, No.2, (1971), pp. 179-88.

became commercial farmers. They were individually tied to merchant houses or absentee landlords in the cities. By the 1930s, 65 percent of the village's farm households had been reduced to tenancy or part tenancy, and 28 percent had become agricultural labourers.[51]

In contrast, some other communities in north China did fit Skinner's concept of closed communities. They were able to seal off outside intruders, whether these were bandits preying on undefended communities, or the state reaching in to impose its bureaucratic will. These communities often had strong local leadership which reinforced community solidarity. For example, Houxiazhai was a multi surname village made up of three lineages, each occupying a neighbourhood within the village. Under a strong collective leadership, it was able to resist the central government's attempt to replace the traditional community organization with the *linlu* or five households system of administration.[52] Another example of a closed community was Taitou in Shandong. This village was a community largely made up of small landowners, artisans, and petty merchants. It successfully resisted the reintroduction of the *baojia* in the 1930s and 1940s on the ground that it was simply a way for the Nationalist government to root out potential communists and not in their community interests.[53] The success of these villages in closing off from outside forces cannot be easily explained. On the one hand, they might have been villages with strong solidarity developed in the warlord period through participating in community-wide activities and associations, such as the Red Spears.[54] We do know that these communities were often characterized by the absence of social

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[51] Huang, *Peasant Economy and Social Change In North China*, p. 269.

[52] Huang, *Peasant Economy and Social Change In North China*, p. 262.

[53] Yang, *A Chinese Village, Taitou, Shantung Province*..

[54] Huang, *Peasant Economy and Social Change In North China*, pp. 260-262.

differentiation, with leaders chosen and removed easily by the villagers.[55] On the other hand, they might have been communities with high rates of tenancy (by northern standards) and tightly controlled by strong willed local leaders determined to maintain the status quo.[56]

But not all North China Plain communities were able to make decisions to open or close their boundaries. Indeed, by the 1940s, many villages, such as Wudian which had a history of military persecution,[57] had disintegrated. Their members had moved into urban areas in the hope of finding better living conditions or into Communist-held areas in the interior. Other peasants turned to banditry to survive or became involved in military campaigns away from home.

As in the North China Plain, rural communities in south China were affected by outside forces in a variety of ways. However, it seems that they were more likely to be open rather than closed communities. Because the land was more fertile and the region was more commercialized, the Pearl River Delta communities were often affected by economic and political forces from the outside. For example, in Xinhui County, political leaders, on whom the villagers depended and to whom they responded, were rapidly changing their character during the 1930s and 1940s. On the eve of the Japanese invasion, traditional local leaders such as the lineage managers in the reclaimed area of the county known as "the sands" were replaced by "local bullies" whose power base was outside the village.[58] They

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[55] Huang, *Peasant Economy and Social Change In North China*, pp. 259-262. Another example of a strong community that remained somewhat closed to state and outside intrusions is Taitou in Shandong. See Yang, *A Chinese Village, Taitou, Shantung Province*..

[56] Pomeranz, *The Making of a Hinterland*, pp. 103-104.

[57] Huang, *Peasant Economy and Social Change In North China*, p. 262.

[58] *Ibid.* pp. 91-94.

are said to have abused their positions for personal gain by setting up an independent bureau of the sands in order to extract arbitrary taxes from the peasants. They forced the peasants to buy 'grain tickets' before being allowed to harvest their crops.[59] As the war progressed, economic conditions became highly unstable. With the fall of Guangzhou and Jiangmen alternate supply routes were developed. As a result, villages in Xinhui became 'opened' to commercial opportunities. This was a time of boom for communities such as Tianma, Tianlu, and Sanjiang, even though the peasants themselves suffered at the hands of local bullies.[60]

In the past, secret societies, such as the Triads, had offered the peasantry a form of protection against the injustices and evils of society. However, by the 1930s secret societies increasingly had become involved with whomever offered the greatest benefits, whether it be warlords, Nationalists armies or CCP activists. Rather than playing the role of peasant protector, secret society members involved with activities such as rent collection, tax farming and self-defence corps acted to protect property on behalf of the landlord.[61] Moreover, during the Japanese occupation, the Nationalist government employed local leaders in GMD held areas to lead resistance forces, but these became adept at changing allegiance whenever personal gain could be made.[62] As a result, peasants were often at the mercy of their bureaucratic patrons and were not able to close their communities to outside political forces.

Not all open communities fared economically as well as those in Xinhui during

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59 Huang, *Peasant Economy and Social Change In North China*, p. 91.

60 *Ibid.* p. 115.

61 Siu, *Agents and Victims*, pp. 88-91.

62 *Ibid.* p. 95.

the period of political turbulence. Zengbu in Dongguan is an example of a community that suffered severe immiseration during the war years. This community experienced tremendous land shortages when emigrant villagers returned to Zengbu from Hong Kong in 1941. There was simply not enough farm land to support all the people of Zengbu. The local leaders were not sympathetic to the plight of the poor. As landlords and as the managers of ancestral trusts, they rented the farmland to outsiders instead of their own kin. Although the village did not disintegrate many villagers were forced to become day labourers in nearby towns and cities.[63] As in Donguan, peasants in Shunde and Panyu also suffered from being open to outside economic forces and unsympathetic local leaders. Panyu peasants were oppressed by increased taxation, rents and tenancy in the 1930s.[64] Shunde had suffered from the demise of its silk industry owing to increased activities of the Japanese in the international silk market and because of the world depression in the late 1920s and early 1930s.[65] The examples of village communities in Xinhui, Donguan, Panyu, and Shunde were not isolated ones. Many others, in fact, suffered from disintegration in times of drastic political and economic changes. Villages in the Pearl River Delta region attacked by Japanese forces disintegrated as villagers moved southwest. Peasant households struck hard by economic dislocation moved into nearby market towns or major cities, which may or may not have promised a more prosperous life.[66]

After the Japanese surrender in 1945, the Nationalists resumed governance but local control in these localities was not achieved. Local leaders who had remained loyal to the Nationalists during the war years were rewarded with official positions of leadership.

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[63] Sulamith Heins Potter and Jack M. Potter, *China's Peasants The Anthropology of a Revolution.* (Cambridge, Mass: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp.24-35.

[64] Chen, *Agrarian Problems in Southernmost China..*

[65] So, *The South China Silk District: Local Historical Transformation*, p. 164.

[66] Siu, *Agents and Victims*, p. 102. See Potter and Potter, *China's Peasants The Anthropology of a Revolution*, pp. 29-31.

Japanese collaborators who remained heavily armed were left often alone by the Nationalists. As conflict between the Nationalists and Communists intensified, peasants in the Pearl River Delta, while not directly involved in the fighting, bore the brunt of the civil war (1947-49) because of increased GMD conscription and further state extraction.[67]

When analyzing state-peasant society relations during the Nationalist period in north and south China, I can provide only a sketchy outline. The constant military activities of these years precludes the painting of any definitive portrait of the time. The lack of accurate, large scale sociological surveys is also a hindrance. What we can ascertain from ethnographic data is substantial variation both in the application of state policies and in reaction by the peasant communities. Unlike Skinner's findings of closed and opened communities during dynastic rule, I surmise that during the 1930s and 1940s no general pattern of peasant reaction to political breakdown can be found. During these times of upheaval, some villages closed off against the reach of the state and other intrusive elements in society while other villages took advantage of the years of upheaval and remained opened to commercialization. Some peasants migrated away from their home communities in search of better lives while others stayed and made the most of a bad situation. Although Skinner's typology of closed and opened communities is useful, it does not seem to be a rule that villages were open in times of peace and closed in times of political/economic turbulence.

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67 Siu, *Agents and Victims*, p. 105.

Chapter Four - State and Peasant Society (1949-62)

By October, 1949, civil war had ended in nearly all parts of China. The Guomindang (GMD) had been defeated by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and the Nationalist Party's elite had fled to Taiwan. With Mao Zedong as its leader, the CCP assumed control of China and formed the central government of the country. The newly centralised state now began to initiate a series of policies that during the next decade were to radically transform the economic, social and political structures of China. The changes greatly affected the world of the peasant, and by the time of the Great Leap Forward (1958) both private land ownership and private means of production had been abolished and replaced by collective or state ownership.

These economic, social and political changes reflected the character of the new central state, which sought to control all aspects of society. In one decade, this state successfully reached into village life and influenced all rural activities. Vivienne Shue has argued that it is too simplistic to see the central state under Mao as a monolithic, totalitarian power in opposition to peasant society.[1] In her view the interaction of state and society was complex, not always conflictual, and indeed was sometimes advantageous to both.[2] For example, the policy of land reform which gave poor peasants the right to use land without having to pay rent also gave the state a means to eliminate the power of lineages and the landlord and rich peasant classes.

This chapter examines state-peasant society relations during the first thirteen years of Communist rule (1949 - 1962). To gain an understanding of how rural society operated

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[1] For discussion on this point see Shue, *Reach of the State.*.

[2] Elizabeth Perry, "Rural Violence In Socialist China." *China Quarterly*, Vol. 103, (1985), pp. 414-40.

under the new CCP government, I shall begin by examining the national and local structures of both party and state. This discussion will be followed by a description of how the central state reorganized rural society between 1949 and 1962. I shall then look at the dual roles of the local cadres as they steered an uneasy course between the central state on the one hand and local peasants on the other. This examination will be accompanied by an analysis of rural community reactions to CCP policies, using Nee's theory of "household individualism"[3], and once again making a distinction between communities in the northern and communities in the southern regions of China.

The national structure of Party and state under the People's Republic of China (PRC) resembled that of its predecessor, the GMD government in several important ways. Both had been guided by the Soviet model during their formative years. At each level of governance (i.e., centre, province, prefecture, city, county, local township or commune) there were parallel Party and state organs. In addition, each state organ and all levels of bureaucracy had Party committees, each headed by a Party Secretary. In both, it was the Party which made policies and the state bureaucracy which administered them.[4]

At the national level in the PRC, the highest organ of the Party was in theory the National Party Congress[5] which was elected for a five year term.[6] This group of delegates

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3 Victor Nee, "Peasant Household Individualism" William L. Parish (ed.) *Chinese Rural Development: The Great Transformation* (New York: M. E. Sharpe Press, 1985), pp. 164-90.

4 For figures on Party membership see Tung, *The Political Institutions of Modern China*, p. 249.

5 The National Party Congress was formed at the first Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) which convened in September 1949. The CPPCC was, temporarily the highest organ of CCP power and after the transitional period of 1949-1954 became a consultative body of the National Party Congress. See Tung, *The Political Institutions of Modern China*, p. 268.

6 It should be noted that descriptions of the national Party and government structure are written in past tense to reflect the historical element of this chapter. Many of these structures continue to be organized and operated in much the same way in present day.

represented the entire Party membership but in fact met too irregularly to function as an active component of government. In its place, the Central Committee of the Party, which was formally elected by the National Party Congress, conducted the making of policies. From the 1950s the Central Committee contained from 100 to 300 regular and alternate members. When full meetings of the Central Committee took place they were called "plenary sessions" or "plenums"and were numbered sequentially following each Party Congress. Thus the "Second Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee" referred to the second full meeting of the Central Committee elected by the Eighth Party Congress. The Central Committee elected its own Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary. The Constitution of 1954 provided that "the Central Committee guides the work of the central state organs and people's organizations of a national character through leading Party members' groups within them."[7]

However the Central Committee's plenary sessions were too large and too infrequent to direct the day to day affairs of the Party.[8] As a result, the Central Committee elected a much smaller Political Bureau, which was to be the real center of power. It carried out the official functions of the Central Committee between plenary sessions. Within the Political Bureau there were different levels of authority, the highest being the Standing Committee which directed a Secretariat to do the routine work of the Political Bureau. The Standing Committee met frequently and brought together a few top people who made the real policy decisions.[9]

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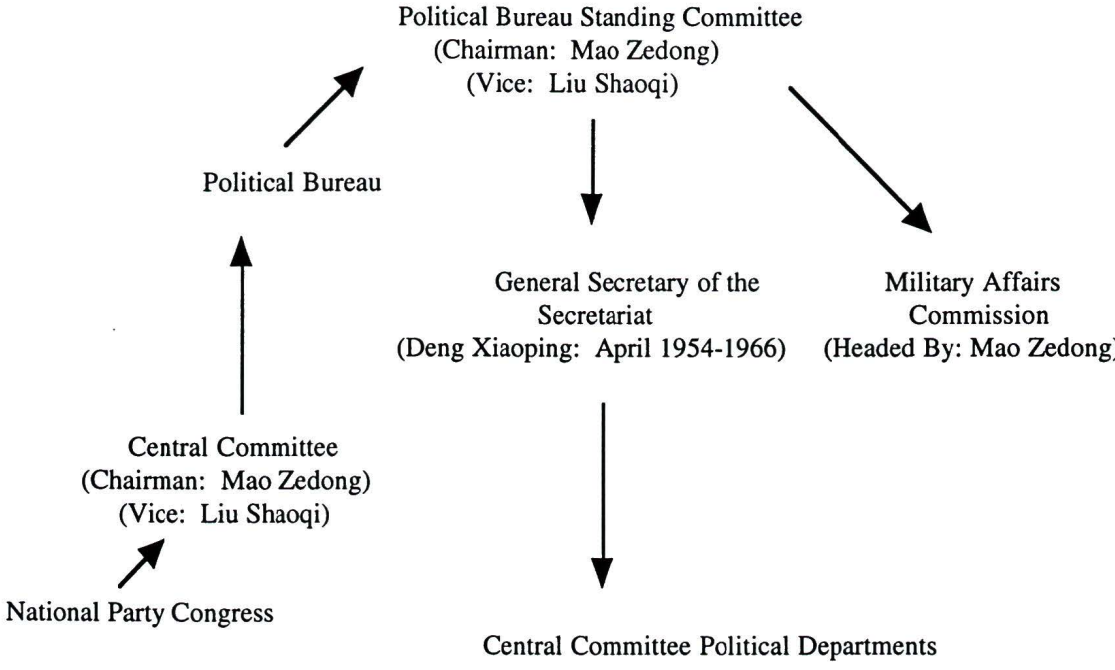
[7] *The Constitution of the Communist Party of China,* 1954, Article 34. In William L. Tung, *The Political Institutions of Modern China* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964) p. 372.

[8] The first plenary session of the National Party Congress to take place after liberation was not held until 1956. This plenum, known as the eighth Congress held a second session two years later. See Craig Dietrich, *People's China A Brief History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 56.

[9] Kenneth Lieberthal, *Governing China From Revolution Through Reform* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1995), p.159.

In theory (according to the Constitution), the larger the governing body, the greater its power. In reality, the opposite was true. China was, in fact, controlled by a very small number of leaders. As shown in Fig. 3., there has always been a considerable overlap in leadership between the Central Committee and the Political Bureau. In the period in question the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Central Committee for example, served concurrently as Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Political Bureau Standing Committee.

Fig. 3. Party Organization At the Center[10] (1949-62)

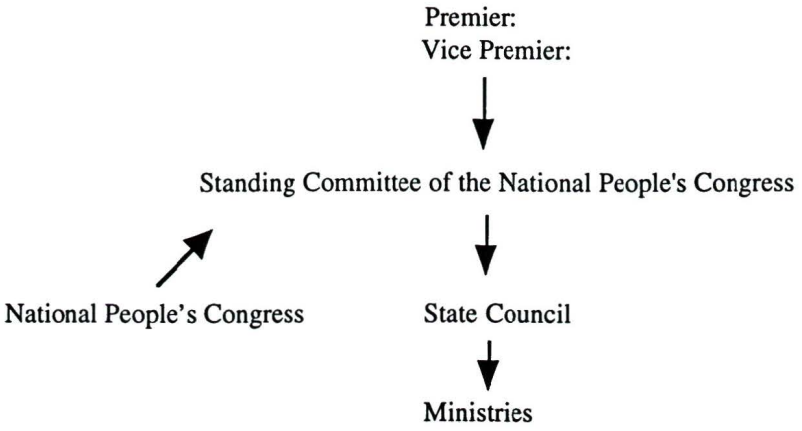


The structure of government was parallel to the Party organization (see Fig.4). As established in the early PRC years the National People's Congress was the governing equivalent of the Party Congress and was chosen every four years. This congress met

10 Adapted from Lieberthal, *Governing China From Revolution Through Reform*, p. 160.

annually and brought together approximately three thousand delegates. As in the Party apparatus, a Standing Committee met between sessions to oversee the affairs of the People's Congress. The National People's Congress formally appointed a State Council which served as a cabinet in the Chinese political system. Subordinate to the State Council were a number of ministries and commissions that formed the national bureaucracy as illustrated in Fig. 4.[11]

Fig. 4. Government Organization At the Center[12]



The Constitution of 1954 divided the country into provinces, autonomous regions, and metropolitan regions (cities). As shown in Fig. 5., the provinces and autonomous regions were further divided into prefectures. Under the prefectures were the counties and municipalities.[13] Below the county were the townships (*zhen* or *xiang*), natural villages (*cun*), and minority villages.

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[11] Lieberthal, *Governing China From Revolution Through Reform*, p. 162.

[12] Adapted from Lieberthal, *Governing China From Revolution Through Reform*, p. 163.

[13] *Constitution of the People's Republic of China* of 1954, Art. 53, Par. 2. In William L. Tung, *The Political Institutions of Modern China* (The Hague: Martinus Hijhoff, 1964) p. 375.

Up until the Great Leap Forward the reach of the Communist state was formally rather similar to that of the Nationalist government. It extended to the level of the township (which was an administrative village with approximately 2000 to 3000 people). However, local governance under the CCP differed in being effectively under the control of both Party and state administrative organs. As far as Party organization was concerned Party congresses at the provincial, county and township levels convened once a year and elected their respective Party committees. Although Party committee members were elected, their powers were delegated by the Central Committee, following the rules of "democratic centralism"[14] . Local Party committees met three or four times a year, as they still do, depending upon their level.

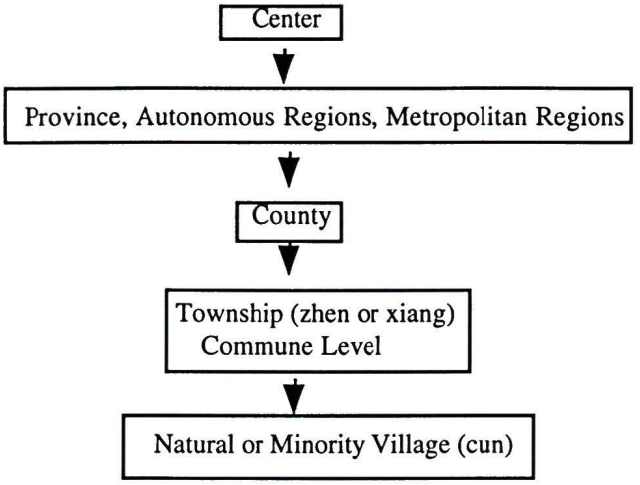
In terms of lower level state administrative organs, there were the people's congresses, the members of which were elected locally.[15] These are illustrated in Fig. 5. Each locality's people's congress in principle established as its executive arm a people's council to take charge of its local government's administration. In practice there was not much local autonomy, however. The local people's congresses had to follow the leadership of the National People's Congress, while the local people's council was required to follow the leadership of the State Council in Beijing. In addition, both the people's congress and the people's council had to defer to the local Party committee, particularly its Party Secretary, whose chain of command led directly to the CCP Central Committee in

[14]The notion of "democratic centralism" , taken from the Soviets, is supposed to center on the principle of consultation prior to making a decision. During the period of consultation everyone in society is said to have the right to freely express his or her views without fear of reprisal. Once a decision is made, however, everyone must abide by the decision regardless of whether or not one agrees with it. See Lieberthal, *Governing China From Revolution Through Reform*, pp. 175-76.

[15] The *Electoral Law of the People's Republic of China for the National People's Congress and Local People's Congress of All Levels*, March 1, 1953 stated that all Chinese citizens eighteen years of age or more had the right to vote and be a candidate for office, with the exception of landlords whose status had not yet been changed according to law, and counter-revolutionaries and others who had been deprived of political rights according to law, and insane persons. Arts. 4 and 5. Cited in Tung, *The Political Institutions of Modern China*, p. 286.

Beijing.

Fig. 5. Territorial Levels of State Administration



Before the Great Leap Forward, there was no formal government at the level of the natural village. The *baojia* was eliminated and informal centers of power such as the local clan societies, crop watching associations and secret societies were proscribed in 1949. In their stead, the CCP encouraged villages to form a peasant association and a militia to govern unofficially and organize village activities.[16] These were dominated by Party members or youth league members obedient to Party discipline. Even this modicum of local autonomy came to an end in the late 1950s when the natural village became a production brigade with several production teams which were directed by the *xiang* government, reorganized as the People's Commune in the wake of the Great Leap Forward. Under this new system, "state and society were united into one", as each People's Commune became a self-contained political, economic and social unit. From this point in Communist history, the reach of the state became deeper than that of the

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16 Roy Hofheinz, "Rural Administration in Communist China." Roderick MacFarquhar (ed.) *China Under Mao: Politics Takes Command* (New York: The M.I.T. Press, 1966), p. 100.

Nationalist government.[17]

While structural changes in the political/administrative systems made possible the formal reach of the state to peasant society, it was ultimately the Chinese Communist Party, particularly under Maoist inspiration, which acted as the driving force in the transformation of society. This set the PRC apart from the GMD state, which was extractive and predatory upon peasant society but not effectively proactive. Following the Soviet model, Mao believed that by the transferring of economic ownership from private to public hands,[18] class polarization would be obliterated and production would increase through socialist transformation. However, unlike Stalin, Mao insisted that socialist transformation could not be meaningful unless it involved the masses.[19] With this belief in mind, he urged the formation of mass organizations which, under the guidance of the Party, would be utilized to further the involvement of the general populace in political activities.[20]

Two important mass organizations which were promoted in the countryside were the Communist Youth League and the Women's Federation. The Communist Youth League was to foster socialist ideals among the young and groom some of them for positions in the corps of cadres. Any person between fourteen and twenty-five could apply for membership. The Women's Federation grew out of the women's associations which, prior to 1949, had been active in encouraging peasant women in the communist-held areas to become politically involved. In 1952 the All-China Democratic Women's Federation

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17 Lieberthal, *Governing China From Revolution Through Reform*, pp. 81-82, 102-108.

18 Vogel, *Canton under Communism,* p.125.

19 Lieberthal, *Governing China From Revolution Through Reform*, pp. 63-65.

20 *Ibid.* pp. 64-65.

(later the All-China Women's Federation) was formed. Its regional committees were to organize women's associations all over China including in the countryside. Through the Federation, the state sought to mobilize women ideologically and ensure that its policies were interpreted and carried out correctly.[21]

The People's Militia is often characterized as another mass organization even though it can also be regarded as a feeder organization of the People's Liberation Army (PLA).[22] It was first developed in conjunction with peasant associations during the First United Front (1923-27). In the 1940s it became a basic component of governance in communities under CCP control. The militia provided the primary organizational means to mobilize the peasant village for war, economic recovery and socialist transformation.[23] After 1949 every village was told to form a militia. These were made up of local activists who assumed the task of politically socializing the peasant youth and motivating villagers to undertake collective works.[24]

Each of the three mass organizations discussed above operated on two levels. On the first, they offered peasants an opportunity to become politically involved in local affairs. On the second, they provided an effective avenue for state penetration into village life. True to the practice of democratic centralism, it was often the central state which

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21 Kay Ann Johnson, *Women, the Family and Peasant Revolution in China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 140-41.

22 Vogel, *Canton under Communism*, p. 274.

23 Victor Nee, "Between Center and Locality: State, Militia, and Village." Victor Nee and David Mozingo (eds.) *State and Society in Contemporary China* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp. 223-243.

24 Richard Madsen, "Harnessing the Political Potential of Peasant Youth." Victor Nee and David Mozingo (eds.) *State and Society in Contemporary China* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp. 244-265.

utilized the local mass organizations to its own end rather than the other way around. The campaign to popularize the Marriage Law of 1950 was a typical example of a law that challenged the traditional patriarchial social structure of the countryside.[25] Similar mass organization tactics were utilized by the central state to manipulate the local situation in other ways. While the CCP leadership was insistent that all cadres must follow the mass line and be attentive to the desires and needs of the people, so as to avoid political alienation,[26] this same state was equally insistent upon the Leninist principle of "democratic centralism" by which cadres were required to submit to discipline from the center. This uncomfortable dichotomy can be said to have left cadres trapped between voluntarism and commandism.

Representing the interests of the central state and the local state were two quite distinct types of cadres: national and rural (local). The national cadres belonged to the central bureaucracy and their assignments were determined by the central government. Their salaries were supplied from the national Treasury and assignments were usually outside their own communities. National cadres also enjoyed privileges such as career mobility, material benefits, access to education, and full pensions.[27] Rural cadres did not have the same privileges. Appointed by the Party to serve as brigade and team leaders of their native communities, rural cadres relied on local revenue for income. They were expected to spend a portion of their days farming as other villagers did, and were expected not only to control local society but to foster Party ideology and conduct campaigns. Here again, they were in an awkward position. While in the minds of the peasants they came to

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[25] Kay Ann Johnson, *Women, the Family and Peasant Revolution in China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

[26] This "mass line" approach was developed through the wartime experiences at Yan'an (1937-45) and the civil war against the GMD (1945-49).

[27] Huang Shu-min, *The Spiral Road Change in a Chinese Village Through the Eyes of a Communist Party Leader* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1989), pp. 133-135.

represent the national authority, in Beijing they were often suspected of "localism".[28] To combat this perceived localism, the central state periodically adopted rectification campaigns to keep local cadres in line. These campaigns were played out in study and struggle sessions which required them to study Maoist-Leninist thought and publicly to criticize each other and themselves. Work teams from outside were usually sent to oversee these campaigns. By using information gleaned from the villagers, the teams would play peasants against rural cadres. Despite the campaigns, during rapid policy shifts or in factional fights, the more astute local cadres were often able to look after their own interests.[29]

From the above, one can perceive a dialectical triangle between the central state, the rural cadres, and the peasants: the central state being the ultimate power holder, the rural cadres being local interpreters and enforcers of state policy, and the peasantry being the recipient of central state policy. Victor Nee's theory of "peasant household individualism" is an attempt to explain how the peasants reacted to this dialectical triangle. There are two parts to this theory. First, Nee argues that the basic unit of organization in the rural community was the family rather than individual. In line with this, Chinese peasants are said to be likely to favour household goals over individual ones. Second, Nee depicts Chinese peasant households as "rational", not "moral" in relationship to their communities. Each household is thus seen as responsive to incentives, willing to take risks, understanding of investment logic and in pursuit of maximized gains.[30] As a result, according to Nee peasants prefer to farm as individual household units rather than under

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[28] R. J. Birrell, "The Centralized Control of the Communes in the Post- "Great Leap" Period." In A.Doak Barnett, ed., *Chinese Communist Politics In Action*, pp. 400-446. (Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press.,1972), pp. 400-443.

[29] Vogel, *Canton under Communism*, pp. 59-60.

[30] Nee, "Peasant Household Individualism." pp. 164-190.

collective organization.[31]

From what I understand about Chinese culture, I agree with the first proposition in Nee's analysis: that a Chinese peasant is best thought of as a member of a family, not as an individual and that a peasant's interests are subsumed by those of the family.[32] However, I have reservations about the assertion that Chinese peasants, however rational, have necessarily always put the interests of the household before those of the community. In the following pages I will consider examples which seem to indicate that community mindedness has sometimes played a larger role in peasant-state relations than Victor Nee gives credit for. Before turning to the examples, however, let me state my general reservations clearly here. First, it seems very unlikely that a sense of belonging or a sense of community never had an influence on peasant behaviour.[33] Peasant households, no matter how strong their internal loyalty, were invariably part of a community, usually small, sometimes quite isolated and often longstanding.[34] It was through living in such a community that individual and family identities were formed and shaped by interaction with neighbours in mutual aid and collaborative projects. With shared experience and history peasant households must have felt some allegiance to their village and home community. Second, it seems to me that starkly contrasting the categories, of "rational" or "moral" is too narrow and static a way of proceeding. The evidence instead seems to suggest that peasants can change from being rational to moral depending on circumstances. When

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31 *Ibid.* pp. 164-90.

32 Fei Xiaotong, "Peasantry and Gentry: An Interpretation of Chinese Social Structures and its Changes."

33 Nee, "Peasant Household Individualism." pp. 164-192. Nee bases his analysis of "Peasant Household Individualism" on the work of Popkin. See Popkin, *The Rational Peasant: The Political Economy of Rural Society in Vietnam.*

34 For a comprehensive description of peasant community development in south China see Siu, *Agents and Victims*, pp. 36-40. For a analysis of peasant community affiliation in north China see Yang's study of Taitou. Yang, *A Chinese Village, Taitou, Shantung Province.*

resources are scarce and basic needs hard to meet, peasant households may admittedly look after their own first, turning their backs on their neighbours in order to survive. During times of even greater hardship, households themselves may fall apart forcing individual family members to fend for themselves. However, depending on broader economic opportunities, peasant households may find that pooling resources and labour with fellow villagers enhances prosperity.

The central state's attempt to transform rural society began with the Land Reform campaign of 1951-53. While according with the Soviet line, this campaign was more than a simple act of land redistribution. It was a means of imparting socialist ideology to the masses by making them actively participate in class struggle sessions of landlords and rich peasants. Its intention was to break up cross-class community solidarity and thereby strengthen the hand of the central state. Because of China's great size, the actual seizure and redistribution of land and assets was inevitably carried out by the local state at the *xiang* or *zhen* level as well as by mass organizations such as Peasant's Associations, Youth Leagues, Women's Associations and People's Militia. Initially, only some peasants cooperated. The first Agrarian Law was "soft," and did not attack village structure[35] but within a year the central state pushed a much harder line. The new Agrarian Law issued by the end of 1951 treated both landlords and rich peasants as class enemies and confiscated both their land and their means of production. According to Maurice Meisner, with increased internal political tensions brought on by China's involvement in the Korean war, class struggle took on a ruthless quality which led to a significant number of landlords condemned to death, and others sent to hard labour camps.[36] This put local cadres and the

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[35] This policy was implemented at different times in different regions depending on, for example, wartime conditions. In north China, in the Communist held areas, land reform started much earlier. See Edward Friedman, Paul Pickowicz, Mark Selden, and Kay Ann Johnson. *Chinese Village Socialist State*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

[36] Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China A History of the People's Republic* (London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1977), pp. 107-108.

rest of the peasants in a moral dilemma.

Yang's report of how the cadres of Nanching village in Guangdong classified the households reveals both their dilemma and the ambiguity of the landlord and rich peasant categories. The classification of rural households, according to criteria set out by both Agrarian Laws, distorted, to a considerable degree, the reality of China's rural societies. In the first place corporate land amounted to more than half the total landholdings,[37] and lineage leaders were often private landlords as well as managers of corporate land. They could often not be defined as "landlords" because the property formally belonged to the lineage rather than to individuals. Secondly, the distinction between landownership and tenancy in the south was, in reality, not sharply drawn. In areas such as the Pearl River Delta the economy was highly commercialized, and there was much buying and selling of land. Most large landlords were absentee landlords who resided in large towns and cities. Those living in the village were small landlords and not easily distinguishable from non-landlords in the quality of their lives. In addition, many "tenants" rented some plots but owned others. They might farm some portion themselves but hire labourers to farm the rest. Moreover, some "landlords" were heavily involved in city commerce and rent from land was only a small proportion of their income. They could thus be defined as "bourgeois clans" instead of as landlords, an important distinction before 1955. Finally, many resident "landlords" had overseas Chinese relations and had income that did not derive from "exploiting" their tenants.[38] This type of "landlord" was defined as "small rentier" rather than "landlord".[39] Thus, in Yang's example the head of the peasants' association, Wang Ping, was classified as a middle peasant, though many villagers felt he

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37 Chen Hanseng, *Agrarian Problems in Southernmost China.* (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1936).

38 Ezra Vogel, "Land Reform in Kwangtung 1951-1953: Central Control and Localism." *China Quarterly*, Vol. 38, (April - June, 1969), p. 39.

39 Siu, *Agents and Victims*, pp. 125-26.

should have been identified as a rich peasant. On the other hand, the widow, Wong Wu Shih, who owned 20 mu of land but could not farm it was classified as a landlord even though a senior officer from the Ministry of Agriculture felt she should have been classified as a middle peasant or small rentier.[40]

Because of these complicated relationships, many peasants in south China were reluctant to participate in land reform campaigns. As their society was based not on social class as defined in the CCP formulae but on lineage hierarchy and district/village solidarity, peasants thought in terms of community and consanguinity. Many saw themselves as members of lineages, neighbourhoods and villages, not as members of an exploited or an exploiting class. [41] Rural cadres and even poor peasants who stood to gain from land reform were thus often reluctant to participate in "struggle" sessions against fellow villagers.[42] In the Pearl River Delta the central state eventually therefore felt compelled to replace rural cadres with outsiders who did not have community ties to bias them.

In north China, on the other hand, available evidence suggests that local cadres faced a different set of difficulties when trying to comply with the Agrarian Laws. Here poverty and frequent natural calamities meant that there were fewer landlords. Although in some prosperous villages there were resident landlords with holdings much larger than those of the south, most villages in poorer areas were inhabited by small owner-cultivators. There were few absentee landlords. Finding it difficult to identify "landlords" when landlords did not exist, local cadres often made judgments that had little to do with

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40 Yang, *Chinese Communist Society: The Family and the Village*. pp. 142-44.

41 Woon, *Social Organization In South China*, pp.

42 Vogel, "Land Reform in Kwangtung 1951-1953." p. 45.

economic reality simply to comply with state quotas.[43] This general tendency has been illustrated by Friedman et al. in the case of Wugong in Hebei Province. The five households classified as landlord and rich peasant in this village were not of great affluence and were, in effect, sacrificial offerings to official requirements.[44] When a second round of classification campaigns was set in motion, higher authorities sent work teams into Wugong to oversee the proceedings. These work teams found the Wugong villagers uncooperative and unwilling to accuse their neighbours. The work teams had to resort to overt bribery to gain the help of even a few of the poorest peasants. In spite of constant pressure to increase the number of landlord and rich peasant designates, this community was able, to a certain extent, to resist the state and retain some sense of unity throughout the land reform campaign.[45] In another round of campaigns to ensure the equitable redistribution of land and assets confiscated from the landlord households, work teams were again sent into Wugong to oversee household classification. The unity of Wugong is not surprising given that it was a village with little income differential and inhabitants who considered themselves part of a community rather than of any particular class.[46]

Not all northern rural communities were made up of peasants with this moral outlook. In villages such as Ten Mile Inn and Changchuang land reform was apparently eagerly carried out because there were pronounced differences between rich and poor. Poor peasants who lived a marginal existence did not have the safety net of kinship ties

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43 Friedman et al, *Chinese Village Socialist State*. pp. 104-110.

44 Friedman et al, *Chinese Village Socialist State*. p. 87. Land reform in Wugong took place prior to liberation as this area was under Communist control during the 1940s.

45 In the later stage of land reform Wugong cadres were instructed to fulfil the goal of the redistribution of land to ensure 2.7 mu of land for former poor peasants. This redistribution left middle peasants with an average of only .01 mu more than the poor-peasant average. Friedman, et al, *Chinese Village Socialist State*, p.104.

46 Friedman, et al,*Chinese Village Socialist State*, p. 93.

found in the south nor the strong sense of community present in northern villages like Wugong. The possibility of improving their position was a compelling reason for the peasants of Ten Mile Inn to support land reform. There were only a few households that could be identified as landlords and redistribution of their land and household effects was not sufficient to benefit every poor household. The sub-county cadres had many of the middle peasant households[47] of Ten Mile Inn reclassified as rich peasants and their land and effects were confiscated. To determine which middle peasant households were to be reclassified as landlord or rich peasant, family histories were searched for three generations to find landlords. The village head, reflecting on this directive, explained that no one was safe from reclassification if traced back for three generations: "If a man is poor, then his son can't afford to marry; and if his son can't marry, there can't be a third generation."[48]

From from the examples cited above, the diversity of peasant response to land reform thus seems to show that peasant households were neither uniformly "moral" nor uniformly "rational". Some villages resisted land reform wholeheartedly while others enthusiastically endorsed it. In socially differentiated villages poor peasants seem to have had the double advantage of embracing a campaign that morally benefited a majority of the community members while rationally benefiting their households. On the other hand, in villages of predominantly small owner cultivators most people apparently saw no benefit to either community or household in falsely labelling neighbours as landlord or rich peasant.

By the end of 1952 land reform was complete. Despite many injustices, the old

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47 During the land reform campaign in the early 1950s the central state classified all peasant households according to a complex formula which determined "levels of exploitation" or the household's relationship to land. The categories included: landlord, rich peasant, middle peasant, poor peasant and labourer. For a detailed examination of class analysis see Vivienne Shue, *Peasant China in Transition: The Dynamic of Development Toward Socialism, 1949-1956* (Berkeley: University of California, 1980), pp. 48-55.

48 Quoting Wang Hsi-t'ang in Isabel Crook and David Crook, *Revolution in a Chinese Village Ten Mile Inn* (London: Routledge &Kegan Paul, 1979), pp. 133-34.

elite had been economically, politically, and, in many cases, physically, destroyed. A new, more equitable, organization of landownership was in place in the countryside. Approximately 43 percent of China's cultivated land had been redistributed to about 60 percent of the poorer peasants.[49] A new stratum of local cadres controlled the villages. The new system did not ensure equitable growth for all households, and in order to prevent the resurfacing of "spontaneous capitalist tendencies," the central state instructed local cadres to encourage the formation of mutual aid teams. Mutual aid teams had existed in the areas under CCP control prior to 1949. Now, as in the earlier period, team membership was voluntary and peasants were to form into teams of approximately eight households each. The idea was simply an extension of the traditional practice of neighbouring farmers helping each other during busy seasons.[50] How did the peasants react? Given the small size of redistributed land per household, poor peasants, some in total control of land assets for the first time in their lives, pooled labour to improve the yield. Many middle peasants, however, especially those which had able-bodied family members and were well equipped with tools and draft animals, remained reticent about joining. Rather than pooling resources, they preferred to farm solely for the household, believing it to be a more appropriate approach to survival.[51]

Private ownership of land and the means of production was of course not to last. The central state had other plans for the peasants. In a push for rapid agricultural growth and socialist transformation, the central state instructed local cadres to organize agricultural producers' cooperatives (APCs). The argument was that collectivizing land, tools and

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49 Yang, *Chinese Communist Society: The Family and the Village*, p. 200.

50 Mark Selden, "Cooperation and Conflict: Cooperative and Collective Formation in China's Countryside." Mark Selden and Victor Lippit (eds.) *The Transition to Socialism in China* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe Press, 1982), pp. 46-47.

51 Siu, *Agents and Victims*, p. 164-166.

animals on a large scale would lead to a dramatic increase in output in agriculture which could support an expanded industrial sector.[52] This would take China a step closer to socialism. The formation of cooperatives, i.e. lower cooperative (lower APCs) at this stage, was to proceed "gradually" in order to provide a firm foundation for full collectivization. At this time, each lower APC was a collective organization formed by joining a number of mutual aid teams already in existence. Landlords and rich peasants were excluded from these early cooperatives. Middle and poor peasant households who made up the membership retained their ownership of land and assets in name, but had to rent these to the cooperative.[53] Private plots were in turn allocated by the cooperative to each household as a means of "paying attention to the peasants' need to grow vegetables and other garden crops" as well as to make the transition of semi-socialist land management more acceptable.[54] For the peasant household, the 5% of arable land given over for private use played an important part in the family earnings. Again membership in the lower APCs did not appeal uniformly to everyone. Middle peasants were attracted to cooperatives that had a predominance of middle peasants and avoided those with poor peasants having few assets. In view of this, the state worked out a system of shares. Each APC member was to purchase a fixed number of such shares, either by contributing land, tools, or cash. Profits from lower APCs were distributed partly on the basis of labour

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52 Agricultural output had increased substantially during the first two years of Communist rule. The speed of progress, however, slowed down after 1952. See Jean-Luc Domenach, *The Origins of the Great Leap Forward. The Case of One Chinese Province* Translated by A.M. Berrett, (Boulder, Colorado:Westview Press, 1995), pp. 13-20.

53 This criterion of property distinguished cooperatives from collectives. The higher APCs, which became the blueprint for the communes, eliminated property ownership among members and all private property became property of the APC. The process was gradual and not all higher APCs abolished private ownership at the same time. As Schurmann notes, it is best to think of the process as beginning with cooperativization and ending with collectivization. Franz Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization in Communist China.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), p. 454.

54 *Resolution on the Question of Co-operativisation*, October 11th, 1955. Cited in Kenneth Walker, *Planning In Chinese Agriculture Socialization and the Private Sector 1956-1962.* (London: Frank Cass & Company Ltd.,1965), p. 10.

(70%) and partly in accordance with the land and supplies contributed (30%) by members.[55] This system was of benefit not only to households with able-bodied labourers but also to those owning land and assets. Most poor peasant households were enthusiastic participants of lower APCs but a minority felt uneasy about joining. These were households which had few production assets to contribute and which often needed to borrow money to pay for the shares.[56]

In North China, where the mutual aid teams and lower APCs were merely an extension of traditional arrangements whereby owners-cultivators in the same village helped one another, the new scheme worked well.[57] In South China, particularly in the Pearl River Delta, where household entrepreneurship was stronger, collective farming was more problematic. Local cadres maintained a cautious approach and allowed mutual aid teams and lower APCs to follow lines of kinship. When conflicts did arise between members of the same lineage, local cadres usually dealt with these as "family squabbles."[58]

Accompanying the move toward lower APCs was the central state's policy throughout the country of "unified purchase and unified sale" (*tongguo, tongxiao*) of grain and oil-bearing crops. To provide rationed grain and oil to the urban workers who were working to fulfil the Five Year Plan in state enterprises from 1952, the central state forced peasants to sell grain and oil-bearing crops at state-set prices. These were 20 to 30 percent lower than market value. This policy was expanded to include cotton in 1954, hogs in

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55 Vogel, *Canton under Communism,* p. 148.

56 Vogel, *Canton under Communism,* pp. 152-53.

57 Friedman, et al., *Chinese Village Socialist State.* pp. 122-24. Crook and Crook, *Revolution in a Chinese Village Ten Mile Inn.* pp. 62-68.

58 Siu, *Agents and Victims*, p. 155-56.

1955 and other farm products in 1956-57.[59] The state set quotas to be collected from mutual aid teams or lower APCs before any profit was distributed to individual household. In theory this arrangement allowed a farm household to retain enough of its crops for its own use and for feed. Households could sell extras in free markets. In practice, the level of extraction was high. Moreover, local cadres were under extreme pressure as instruments of the central state, and some overzealous cadres demanded amounts over and above the quotas, leaving the peasants very little for home consumption.[60] All over China peasants reacted against this high-handed policy by growing fewer crops or growing crops less enthusiastically. Between 1954 and 1956 there was thus a drop in production from 9 to 2 percent per year.[61]

The central state and particularly the Mao groups refused to recognize these signs of passive resistance. When grain came to be in short supply in the urban centres, the government pushed for further collectivization and advocated the formation of higher APCs which involved the elimination of private ownership of land, tools and animals. Distribution in the higher APCs was carried out solely according to labour (100%). A specified number of work points were assigned to each job by the cooperative leadership and the number of points earned depended on one's labour contribution. Private plots were still allowed but there was no compensation for land, tools or animals already pooled in team farming. The lack of compensation for assets put people unable to work in a difficult position, causing the very young, elderly and disabled to depend on able-bodied labourers in their families or on collective welfare. Collective welfare usually took the form of grain

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59 Dwight Perkins, *Market Control and Planning in Communist China.* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.,1966), p. 50-52.

60 Dali L. Yang, *Calamity and Reform in China State, Rural Society, and Institutional Change Since the Great Leap Famine.* (Stanford, Calif..: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 27.

61 Terry Sicular, "Grain Pricing A Key Link in Chinese Economic Policy." *Modern China*, Vol. 14, No. 4, (October, 1988), pp. 452-460.

allocations and monetary subsidies which were taken from the APC's collective coffers but which were often below subsistence level.[62] As a result many middle peasant households which had contributed private property are reported to have felt cheated by the new system,[63] and they were both disillusioned and skeptical about the advantages of full-blown collectivization. Some continued to sabotage the state by engaging in black market trading of grain, cotton, oil, and hogs. Others went back to family farming.[64]

By 1956, Mao's High Tide of Socialism was in full swing and the central state in effect abandoned the "mass line" even though official discourse continued to affirm its use. Peasants and local cadres had no choice but to comply. By 1957, approximately 97 percent of the rural population was organized into large cooperatives, each of which usually coincided with the boundaries of a village. Landlords, rich peasants and other "bad elements" who had been excluded from cooperatives were now brought into the organization though without political rights. All privately owned land, draft animals, and major production materials, such as large-scale farm implements, were to be turned over to the APC as collective property.[65] To gain complete control of the countryside and to combat the surfacing of "capitalist" tendencies, like black market profiteering, the central state did away with the "Three Freedoms": farming private plots, carrying on side-line production, and engaging in private market activities. This proved to be a turning point in state and peasant society relations in both the north and the south. Peasants became openly defiant and destructive. They killed their pigs and poultry, chopped down their fruit trees,

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62 Friedman et al, *Chinese Village Socialist State*. p.191.

63 Friedman et al, *Chinese Village Socialist State*, p. 191.

64 Zhou, *How The Farmers Changed China,* pp. 46-48.

65 Vogel, *Canton Under Communism*, pp. 156.

and allowed their draft animals to die rather than hand them over to the state.[66]

However, in the wake of the Hundred Flowers campaign in the cities, in which the intelligentsia was encouraged to express critical thinking freely, there was a softening of Beijing's policy toward the peasants. The prices of agricultural inputs were lowered and grain procurement levels were reduced. Quotas were readjusted with reference to the "normal"[67] yield of the land, and the state promised that for three years it would take no more than 40 percent of any increase in production.[68] In addition, it offered higher procurement prices to peasants in low production areas. Accompanying the adjustments to grain procurement policy were orders to local cadres to relax their commandist approach to collectivization. However, as of late 1956, peasants remained generally discontented with the way things had been going. Instead of being grateful they now seized the opportunity to leave the cooperatives. Free markets were reopened illegally and private plots increased from 5 to 10% of the collective lands.[69] Private sidelines were widely practised and a substantial number of peasants began devoting all their energies to private activities, at the expense of their collective responsibilities. Local cadres had no wish to be left out of lucrative private enterprises and soon followed the example of other peasants by becoming profiteers. These reactions to the relaxing of central state policy may be taken to reflect a rational approach on the part of peasant households but do not necessarily imply a lack of moral responsibility toward the greater rural community. Rather, they stemmed from a desire to pull away from a system of collectivization that had been imposed by the central state and was, from their point of view, of benefit to neither household nor their natural

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66 Walker, *Planning In Chinese Agriculture*, p. 62.

67 "Normal" yield referred to the amount the land should produce in an ordinary year.

68 Perkins, *Market Control and Planning in Communist China*, pp. 50-52.

69 Walker, *Planning In Chinese Agriculture*, pp. 68-69.

community.

By the summer and autumn of 1957, the central state, in the middle of the anti-rightist campaign in the cities, regained its control over rural society by doing away with any vestiges of the Three Freedoms. It brought an end to free markets, reduced the size of private plots and eliminated private sales of crucial items such as grain, sugar and cotton. Work teams were sent to the countryside to engage the peasants in "Socialist Education" by explaining the "correct" view with respect to collectivization. Landlords and rich peasants were blamed for having misled the peasants. Some local cadres were accused of profiteering and became the targets of rectification campaigns.[70]

From this point until 1978 there was no turning back from the collective order. Within a year, the central state took a giant step towards socialist transformation, the Great Leap Forward, which inadvertently brought a major catastrophe upon the peasants. The Great Leap was initiated for two reasons: one economic, the other ideological. The economic reason was that, even after the formation of the higher APCs, urban food shortages continued. The central state believed that the large-scale irrigation facilities had to be expanded if agricultural productivity was to be improved. To reduce capital expenditure, the state looked to the mobilization of corvee labour.[71] If the advanced APCs could be expanded and strengthened, the Beijing leaders argued, the peasants could be mobilized to improve the infrastructure. The ideological reason for the launching of the Great Leap Forward is attributable to the vision of the charismatic leader, Mao Zedong. Mao believed that socialism could be attained only by a combination of revolution and production. He believed in the transformative nature of the peasant masses -- once properly organized into large-scale collectives, peasants could both leap toward

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70 Vogel, *Canton Under Communism,* pp. 205-210.

71 Lieberthal, *Governing China From Revolution Through Reform.*, p. 98.

communism and, at the same time, produce miracle harvests.[72] So great was his influence that ideological euphoria triumphed over any economic misgivings. Mao's idea of a Great Leap Forward was embraced wholeheartedly by the central state in 1958.

To facilitate the Great Leap Forward, the People's Communes were set up. These were groups of APCs amalgamated to form single communes each divided into a three-tiered government structure: the commune, the brigade, and the production team. At this stage, the boundaries of each commune were huge, taking in an area equal to three *xiang* or *zhen* (the size of three marketing communities of the pre-1949 period). The brigade was the size of a *xiang*, while the team equalled a natural village. The communes were not simply a new form of bureaucratic organization. They were the core of a system that governed all the political, economic and social functions of rural society. Politically, the commune was under the dual control of administrative cadres and Party committees in much the same way as was every level of government from Beijing to the province to the county. However, while national cadres appointed by the county government ran the commune level of government, it was the local cadres who were in charge of production teams and production brigades. While there was no Party Committee at the production team level, mass organizations, such as Youth Leagues, the Women's Federation, and the People's Militia had their basic cells in every village.[73] The extension of the state to rural society reached its climax.

Economically, each commune was expected to produce enough to meet its own needs. This was partly because Mao believed that an autarkic organization, such as a

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[72] It should be noted that a division among the top leaders had developed during this period with respect to the development of collectivized agriculture. Some leaders, such as Peng Dehui did not agree that collectivized agriculture under the APCs had produced substantial gains. Peng warned against further collectivization and sought to dissolve the higher APCs. See Walker, *Planning In Chinese Agriculture Socialization and the Private Sector 1956-1962*, p. 69.

[73] Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization in Communist China.*

commune, could survive even if the cities were wiped out by atomic weapons.[74] To show that China was moving to socialism ahead of the Soviet Union, Mao also made the Commune the "unit of accounting". The Commune was thus to control all means of production. Private plots were abolished, animals and tools were handed over to the commune government which was to decide what crops would be grown, where, when and how in line with national policy. Some male peasants were made to farm in production teams. Others were to work in collective enterprises producing daily necessities and building supplies. By rotation, all able-bodied males were to work in public work projects such as irrigation and land reclamation, while all able-bodied women were recruited into production teams to do farming. In addition to controlling production and public work, the commune was to handle circulation, distribution, and credit. It took over the operation of supply and marketing cooperatives and credit cooperatives. It also allocated grain to peasant households via the production team. The formula for grain distribution was based 70 percent on need (how many people per household) and 30 percent on work points.[75] The amount of grain calculated according to these two principles was sent to the collective mess halls, set up by each production team. All peasant ate at these mess halls, regardless of individual productivity. Because peasants no longer ate at home, most household effects were confiscated. Pots, pans, bowls, chopsticks, chairs and tables were taken and donated to the mess halls, or in the case of iron goods, used in the backyard furnace campaign.[76]

The commune was also to be self-contained as a social unit. Commune membership was inherited along male lines, with women married into or out of the

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74 Spence, *The Search For Modern China*, p. 581.

75 Work points were allocated according to the amount of time each peasant -labourer put into production.

76 William Parish and Martin Whyte (1978), *Village and Family in Contemporary China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

commune. The household registration system, put into place in 1956 to prevent rural to urban migration, tied peasants to the community of their birth or marriage. However during the Great Leap Forward, family life was drastically reduced. Although peasants still retained their own homes, the household was no longer to be the centre of production and consumption. The many household chores hitherto regarded as female duties were really or theoretically taken over by the commune organization so that women could participate fully in paid labour and eventually achieve equality with men. Mess halls, collective nurseries, and "happiness homes" for the elderly were set up to remove women's domestic burden.[77] The launching of the Great Leap was preceded by the removal of any local cadre who did not toe the Party line. To ensure the compliance of the peasantry, commune organization was accompanied by a new atmosphere of militancy.

How did the peasants react? Apparently, not all peasants needed persuading, and many were swept along by the euphoria of the Brave New World. Others were impressed by the commune's guarantee of a social security as health care clinics, staffed by "barefoot doctors", became universal, and commune schools made access to education more widespread. In 1958 a bumper harvest ensured a healthy supply of food for the village mess halls. All these factors gave an utopian quality to the first few months of the Leap.[78]

It did not take long for peasants to be disillusioned however. With the central

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[77] The CCP promoted the liberation of women through such policies as the 1950 Marriage Law and the emphasis of women as a powerful source of labour. Women were not totally emancipated during the Mao years; they continued to be paid less for their labour than their male counterparts and the few women that attained positions of leadership were usually related to overseeing "women's issues" such as birth control. See Judith Stacey, *Patriarchy and Socialist Revolution In China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983). Kay Ann Johnson, *Women, the Family, and Peasant Revolution In China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983). Elizabeth Croll, *Women and Rural Development In China* (London: International Labour Office, 1985).

[78] Siu, *Agents and Victims*, pp. 174-184. Huang Shu-min, *Spiral Road: Change in a Chinese Village Through the Eyes of a Communist Party Leader* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1989), pp. 57-59.

state's constant demands for more procurement and more corvee labour outside the peasants' community, both the peasants and the rural cadres soon began to lose faith. For instance, in Tianlu Commune, Xinhui County, Guangdong, rural cadres are reported to have ignored the order to speed up the pace of farming, and peasants merely went through the motions of working the fields. Some stopped altogether. Similarly in north China Raoyang farmers lay down in the fields and refused to work. As hunger grew the last draft animals were slaughtered and consumed, and all farming stopped.[79]

As the Leap proceeded through 1959, official campaigns to increase production became ever more frenzied. The central state intruded into peasant societies with irrational directives. For example, the central state encouraged plowing fields to the depth of one and a half to five feet, with some to be plowed to a depth of six feet although every peasant knew that mixing of clay with fertile top soil reduced the capacity for production. Similarly the state ordered close planting of seedlings, believing that more plants would result in a greater harvest, whereas in fact seeding too closely weakens all plants and leaves none of good quality. Refusing to listen to the voice of experienced local farmers, the central state imposed its will by organization and ideology. A typical tactic was to hold up a successful experiment from one part of China as an example and force the rest of the country to emulate it. Peasants in the northern area of Baoding were thus told to follow the example of Henan and plant sweet potatoes. They were to cut down crops already grown to make way for new potato seedlings. Planted too late, the sweet potatoes grew only to the size of a small finger.[80] Similar incidents occurred in other parts of China.[81]

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79 Friedman et al, *Chinese Village Socialist State*, p. 228-232.

80 Friedman et al, *Chinese Village Socialist State*, p. 232.

81 Vogel, *Canton Under Communism*, p. 256. Potter and Potter, *China's Peasants The Anthropology of a Revolution.*, pp. 71-76. Siu, *Agents and Victims*, pp. 184-87. Chan et al., *Chen Village*, pp. 24-25.

For all its enthusiastic efforts at mass mobilization, the bold experiment of the Great Leap Forward proved to be a disaster, a tragic failure which caused widespread starvation and death.[82] Many things were wrong with the campaign from the very beginning, and its already slim chances of success were greatly diminished by three years of poor weather (1959 to 1961) and by the abrupt withdrawal of Soviet experts in the same years. One underlying reason of the Great Leap Forward's failure was the excessive size of the People's Commune. Embracing approximately 5000 households, sometimes many more, it was too large to allow the previously intimate relationship between peasants and their communities. The peasant's morality traditionally revolved around a lineage , a village and a standard marketing area. The peasants were used to informal government by unofficial leaders, not formal government by agents of the central state as in the commune system.[83] The abnormally large size of the commune resulted in low work incentives. Able bodied peasants suffered from low morale because this large and impersonal communal government was the unit of economic accounting. According to Lieberthal, they did not like the products of labour to be redistributed to strangers according to need in other villages or to share food with non-producers in the same mess halls. They could not cooperate with strangers from remote villages to do public work. A second fundamental reason for the failure of the Great Leap was the experiment of abolishing the functions of the family as well as the private household economy. As Nee has pointed out, this apparently ran too much against the grain of traditional Chinese culture. For both men and women, the family was of utmost importance. By collectivizing "housework", forcing families to donate household effects, and abolishing private plots and private marketing, the authorities alienated peasants from their traditional communities. A third reason for the Great Leap's failure was the counter-productive intrusion of the state. Its strong emphasis

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78 There is no one figure of the number that perished during the Great Leap Forward as they range from 16.5 million to 40 million. See Judith Banister,*China's Changing Population* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), Chapter 2.

83 Lieberthal, *Governing China From Revolution Through Reform*, p. 105-106.

on large projects removing huge amounts of peasant labour had left too few farmers to work the land. Its overly-optimistic targets and quotas for procurement left the peasants with little food and no incentive to farm. Its unrealistic suggestion for crop patterns which flew in the face of the peasant's conventional wisdom, resulted in economic disasters.

In the Great Leap Forward, peasant reaction to state policy can be seen as both rational and moral, depending on the stage of the Great Leap. During the first euphoric year peasant households embraced the idea of communes in anticipation of a better life, believing that all would benefit. This might be considered a moral reaction. Later, drastic shortages of resources brought disillusionment and encouraged neither rational nor moral behaviour. Freeloaders were discovered and exposed. Meals in mess halls became suspicion-laden events with everyone watching everyone else. Peasants resented the replacement of family living by collective socialist living and when food ran out, they resorted to patriarchial family survival tactics. In some areas such as Henan and Shandong, women were forced out of their husband's villages so that food could go to blood relatives. Wives and daughters were sold by their husbands or fathers, and prostitution resurfaced. Many families fell apart as individual members deserted their villages and moved to the cities.[84]

By 1959 much of China's leadership was waking up to the fact that the countryside was devastated. Nevertheless, it took two years of political struggle behind closed doors for the central state under the leadership of Liu Shaoqi to scale down Mao's utopian dream. Although no one dared to propose disbanding them altogether, the communes were drastically reduced in size and function. Now the boundary of a commune was made to coincide with the pre-1949 standard marketing community, the brigade with that of a

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[84] Friedman, et al., *Chinese Village Socialist State*, p. 240-45. Jonathan Unger, "Remuneration, Ideology, and Personal Interests in a Chinese Village, 1960-1980." In William Parish (ed.), *Chinese Rural Development. The Great Transformation* (New York: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1991), pp. 117-140.

natural village and the production team was made up of 8 - 10 households in the village. The commune was still the chief administrative unit and still controlled collective non-agricultural enterprises and social services, but it no longer involved itself with agriculture. The brigade became the new owner of the tools and means of production which it then allocated to the production team. By 1961, the production team was made the basic unit of accounting, decentralizing decision-making even further down to the level of the peasant.[85]

Under the revamped system relations between the brigade and production team were defined by the "three guarantees and one reward" system in which it was the brigade which set out certain targets for output and procurement, certain costs of agricultural inputs, and amounts of corvee labour the team had to supply. If the team did better than expected its members could receive bonuses. The "four fixes" was also introduced which ensured the team the use of definite quantities of land, labour, tools and animals.[86] Central state policies moved away from intensive collectivization. The families regained their confiscated extant household effects, and women went back to individual housework. Most collective facilities, including the mess halls, were abolished. Households were allowed private activities and market transactions. At first, peasants were cautious, being suspicious that the re-legalization of the "Three Freedoms" was a temporary measure. Soon, however, they again began to work private plots and to raise pigs and poultry in an effort to provide for themselves.[87] They also resumed sideline production, like manure collection, as an additional source of family income.

According to Vogel's evidence for Guangdong, by mid-1961 local cadres were

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85 Vogel, *Canton Under Communism*, pp. 282-85. Alan Liu, *Mass Politics In the People's Republic. State and Society in Contemporary China* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), pp. 45-47.

86 Vogel, *Canton Under Communism*, pp. 272-287.

87 Walker, *Planning In Chinese Agriculture Socialization* , pp. 87-96.

faced once again with the "problem" of peasants' spending too much time farming their own plots and pursuing sidelines at the expense of the collective fields. Not unlike the period of relaxation in the wake of the Hundred Flowers campaign in the cities, peasants now seized the opportunity to improve the livelihoods of family members. Although the new awarding of work points according to actual labour encouraged them to work hard on the collective lands, the peasants were still inclined to favour their private plots and holding back fertiliser and night soil for private use was common. What did help the local cadres maintain the collective morale of the peasants were the reduced size of the communes and the decentralization of production and distribution down to the brigade and, ultimately, the team. The peasants were thus able to see the effect of their personal involvement in the collective effort.[88]

Accompanying the institutional changes in the early 1960s was a national rectification campaign, guided by the central state's "Twelve Articles" which lay the blame for the devastation wrought by the Great Leap Forward at the door of the local cadres. To protect the ideology and legitimacy of the CCP, local cadres were made the scapegoats for failure. Although this may have satisfied some peasants, this campaign destroyed any vestige of morale among local cadres and had a lasting effect.[89]

To conclude, the above analysis of the early PRC years has shown how in their different ways the peasants and local cadres of north and south China responded to the often impractical, frequently contradictory, plans and policies of the central government. It can be seen that the reactions of the peasants were so varied that to make any simple

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88 Vogel, *Canton Under Communism*, pp. 281-87.

89 Spence, *The Search For Modern China*, pp. 591-92. Vogel (1980) *Canton Under Communism*, pp. 272-287. Harry Harding, *Organizing China The Problem of Bureaucracy 1974-1976* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1981), pp. 181-182. This point will be examined further in the next chapter.

generalization about Chinese "peasant behaviour" or to see a simple definitive pattern in that behaviour is difficult. In comparatively prosperous villages with good lineage/territorial solidarity some peasants continued in the tradition of a strong, cohesive community and were slow to respond to government directives on class struggle. In others, where the less fortunate inhabitants had little to lose and much to gain through revolutionary action, villagers are reported to have leapt at the chance to change the social order. How the peasant communities reacted to the decrees and social innovations of state authority depended to a considerable degree on their economic circumstances and on the structure and history of their particular community.

Challenging as it did the traditional practices and rituals of natural villages, of kinship networks and of filial loyalty, the commune system redefined the boundaries of the "peasant community". The new community was predicated on team membership rather than on shared ancestry. Although the new boundaries sometimes corresponded with the old lineage demarcation,[90] at others they were completely at odds. Even in communities where lineage networks were not strongly entrenched the peasants' sense of community was altered.[91] Peasants were pressured to give up their attachment to their natural community and their family economy, and to transfer their allegiance to a large collective imposed by the state. Often the peasants did not see how pooling resources, performing public works, doing team farming, and dividing the harvest in large collectives would be of benefit to their own families or to their local communities. To many of them, such an arrangement simply aided strangers about whom they did not care. A considerable part of their crops was diverted by the central government to feed the city workers -- people

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[90] An example of teams that followed old patterns of kinship can be found in Chen village. See Chan, et al., *Chen Village.*

[91] For an example of teams that purposefully departed from traditional networks of lineage see the Production teams of Zengbu examined in Potter and Potter, *China's Peasants The Anthropology of a Revolution..*

remote from the moral community they knew.

In the introduction to this chapter I pointed out that in much of its form the CCP state resembled that of the GMD. Where the CCP differed, however, was in its ability to reach into and control peasant society. By means of Party committees and mass organizations the central state was able to permeate village life completely and control some of the most fundamental unit of society, including the family. It was partly the extent of this control, more easily achieved by the uniformity of village leadership, and the insistence on rapid economic growth and socialist transformation, that led to the tragedies of the Great Leap Forward. With the coming of disaster, however, many peasants faced starvation and turned inward, tending to work solely for their families. When things were very bad, even family members were sometimes sacrificed - daughters were sold and wives were sent away from their husbands' villages. To suggest that these were the reasoned actions of peasants coolly choosing individuals over family, and family over community would be quite wrong. Desperation drove peasants to behave as they did simply to survive.

When the Great Leap Forward came to an end, conditions were so calamitous in the countryside that peasant households eagerly seized the opportunity to farm private plots and engage in sidelines. Collectivization under the commune system had proved a failure and, as Peng Dehuai, then Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, and Deng Xiaoping all saw, it had not been in the best interests of either household or community or nation-state. No longer required to work under the poor and discredited guidance of the central state the peasants were now directed to place their energies where there was a guarantee of return.[92]

Victor Nee suggests that Chinese peasants have persistently held the belief that family farming is a better form of profit maximising than team farming. Furthermore, he

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92 Zhou, *How The Farmers Changed China,* pp. 48-51. Dali Yang, *Calamity and Reform in China State,* pp. 71-93.

claims that the lack of incentives in the commune system and the problem of "free-rider dilemma" reinforced the peasant's tendency to give allegiance to the household rather than to the community.[93] According to Nee, this type of behaviour, which he labels "peasant household individualism," is most easily understood by using Samuel Popkin's theory of the "rational peasant". Popkin contends that peasants, not unlike other groups in society, respond to incentive structures, understand investment logic, and are not necessarily adverse to risk in the pursuit of utility maximization.[94] According to this model peasants are first and foremost profit maximizers who put the interests of self and family before community welfare and any decision they make will be predicated on this philosophy. As noted in the introduction, Popkin's theory was formulated in answer to James Scott, whose model of the peasant "moral economy" argues that peasants live by a subsistence ethic which includes a right to subsistence as well as a reciprocal set of obligations and rights. To ensure their basic security, peasants according to this view will make decisions that serve the best interests of the community rather than those which deliver the maximum individual profit.

As explained above I have reservations with respect to Nee's use of the "rational" peasant theory as an explanation of peasant reaction to collectivization. As seen in the discussions above, and in Nee's own empirical findings,[95] community mindedness was prevalent in many villages where peasants in the early 1950s voluntarily participated in mutual aid teams and lower APCs. These mutual aid teams and lower APCs were small scale cooperatives, small enough to allow members to work with people they knew and with whom they shared a community. The large communes brought in by the central state during the Great Leap Forward however were too big and impersonal to foster a sense of

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93 Nee, "Peasant Household Individualism." pp. 164-190.

94 Popkin, *Rational Peasant*, pp. 25-31.

95 Nee, "Peasant Household Individualism." p. 181.

community mindedness. Membership in these unwieldy communes was not voluntary and peasants were left with a sense of alienation that bred disillusion and mistrust rather than communal loyalty.[96] The disintegration of community was exacerbated by the continued and punitive extraction of resources by the central state. Peasants were not even provided with basic subsistence[97] and this uncertainty led to a further decline of community conscience. As the communal structure had not met their basic subsistence needs, peasants had no choice but to turn to alternative forms of survival.

To avoid falling into a trap of simplification as I think Nee does, I would advance a model of Chinese peasant behaviour which blends elements of both community mindedness and profit maximising. I should apply this model in analyzing the actions and reactions of Chinese peasant households to the central state's policies of progressive collectivization of the countryside. My blend of the two components assumes that optimally peasant households made decisions that were best for the household and also for the community of which the household was part. In this context, I define community as that which developed spontaneously rather than by imposition. Before 1949 the Chinese peasant household identified itself primarily with the village and secondarily with the "standard marketing community" where everyone was in some degree familiar with everyone else. When the large communes of the Great Leap period came into being (1957-58), people who at best barely knew each other were thrown together and peasants lost their sense of communal responsibility. As the Great Leap progressed (1958-60) more and more was demanded from the communes by the central state. The peasants saw their right to basic subsistence threatened and in many cases, lost altogether. The perception of this loss and the anxiety it inevitably engendered were factors which in my view contributed in no small way to the erosion of community spirit and the swing toward household

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[96] One of the essential elements of the moral economy theory is that a peasant community must be small enough to enable all members to know each other. The large communes of the Great Leap Forward period did not fit this criterion of the moral economy theory. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant,* pp.

[97] Nee, "Peasant Household Individualism." pp. 164-190.

individualism.

studies of southern China[4]. Research information on the North China Plain has been limited to Marc Blecher's and Wang Shaoguang's work[5] on Hebei Province and Diana Lary's work[6] of migratory movement in Shandong.

In the pages to follow I continue with an examination of the triangular relations between the central state, the local cadres and the peasants. I begin with a discussion of the organizational structure of the commune. Then using Richard Madsen's concept of "Maoist morality,"[7] I will examine the central state in light of the Maoist struggle for hegemony and its effects on rural cadres and peasant society. I will analyze how the new state discourse permeated peasant society through a close examination of four major campaigns, the Socialist Education Movement which included the "Small and Big Clean-ups" Campaign (1963-66), the Cultural Revolution (1966-69), and two subsidiary campaigns that fell under the guise of the Cultural Revolution, "Taking Grain As The Key Link" and "Learning From Dazhai".

In all these examples, I shall examine the state-local cadre and the local cadre-peasant relationships. Local cadres had dual roles, as "state agents" on the one hand and as spokespersons of the local community on the other. As "state agents", rural cadres were

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[4] Chan, et al, *Chen Village Under Mao and Deng*, University of California Press. Vogel, *Canton Under Communism: Programs and Politics in a Provincial Capital, 1949-1968.* Parish and Whyte, *Village and Family in Contemporary China.* Siu, *Agents and Victims In South China: Accomplices in Rural Revolution.* Potter and Potter, *China's Peasants The Anthropology of a Revolution* . Oi, *State and Peasant In Contemporary China The Political Economy of Village Government.*

[5] Marc Blecher and Wang Shaoguang, "The Political Economy of Cropping in Maoist and Dengist China: Hebei Province and Shulu County, 1949-90." *The China Quarterly*, no. 137, (March 1994), pp. 63-98.

[6] Diana Lary, "Hidden Migrations: Movement of Shandong People, 1949-1978." *Chinese Environment and Development, Special Issue* (1997).

[7] Richard Madsen, *Morality and Power In A Chinese Village* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

expected, during times of ideological campaigns, to conduct struggle sessions to keep alive the tenets of "class struggle". However, when work teams were sent into villages to carry out rectification campaigns against these same local leaders, they themselves became victims of struggle sessions. In such an environment, local leaders were in a precarious position, being both agents and objects of scrutiny, and this created unpredictability for peasant society. As for local cadre-peasant relations and their reactions to Maoist state hegemony, I shall argue that these fit well with James Scott's notion of "passive peasant resistance".[8]

As mentioned at the end of Chapter Four, after the Great Leap period (1959-61) the commune remained as a unit of organization but was radically altered in size and responsibilities. By 1964 there were approximately seventy-four thousand communes in China, a substantial increase in number which meant a corresponding reduction in size.[9] Each commune was now made up, on average, of 1600 households and was the approximate size of a standard marketing community.[10] Along with size, the commune's economic role was also reduced. However it continued to be in control of the larger rural industries and was involved in overall planning, grain management and tax collection.

The separation between the Party and the administration at the commune level was only nominal. The Party Committee in fact monopolized all the administrative posts. As can be seen in Fig. 5, the Party Secretary held the post of Commune Director. The two Deputy Secretaries were the Chief of the Political and Legal Department and the Chief of

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[8] James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

[9] During the height of the Great Leap Forward (1958) there were approximately 24,000 communes each which encompassed, on average, 5000 households. Byung-Joon Ahn, "The Political Economy of the People's Commune in China: Changes and Continuities." (1975), p. 636.

[10] Skinner, "Marketing and Social Structure in Rural China, Part 3."

the Finance Department respectively. The Party's Organizational Committeeman served as the Commune Deputy director, while the Secretarial Clerk of the Party Committee also acted as Secretarial Clerk of the Commune Congress.[11] In addition, despite constitutional stipulations[12] the Commune Congress did not actually elect members of the Commune Management Committee and Supervision Committee. It was the Commune Party Committee which slated the appropriate names and the Commune Congress merely confirmed the appointments.[13]

The commune contained a number of production brigades, the size of which varied. On average they consisted of one to three natural villages each, or a total population of 500 to 3000 people.[14] As with the commune, there was an overlap of Party and government posts at this level. On paper, the government was run by the Brigade Management Committee whose members were supposed to be elected by the Brigade Congress without interference by the Party. In actual fact, the Brigade Party Branch was the top decision-making body while the Brigade Management Committee was expected merely to follow orders.[15] Such dominance over government at this level of administration greatly

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[11] Barnett, *Cadres, Bureaucracy, and Political Power in Communist China*, p. 343.

[12] Barnett, *Cadres, Bureaucracy, and Political Power in Communist China*, pp. 349-50.

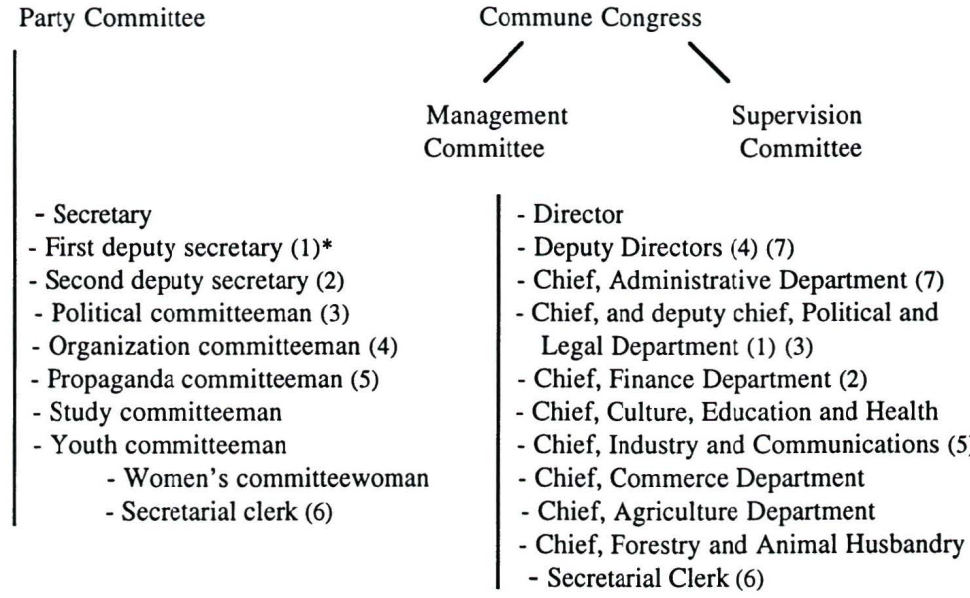
[13] The Commune Management Committee's membership, made up of national cadres, supervised a number of subordinate departments which are listed in Fig. 5. The Supervision Committee was a smaller body than the Management Committee and was responsible for checking the overall operations of the commune and ensure implementation of current regulations and policies.

[14] The population figures given for brigades are approximations as the size varied from region to region. Barnett gives figures of approximately 2000 to 3000 persons per brigade while Byung-Joon Ahn gives approximations of 500 to 1000 persons. Barnett, *Cadres, Bureaucracy, and Political Power in Communist China*, p. 364. Byung-Joon Ahn, "The Political Economy of the People's Commune In China." p. 636.

[15] Barnett, *Cadres, Bureaucracy, and Political Power in Communist China*, pp. 366-67. R. J. Birrell, "The Centralized Control of the Communes in the Post- "Great Leap" Period." In A.Doak Barnett, ed., *Chinese Communist Politics In Action* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969), pp. 400-446.

enhanced the ability of the CCP to reach into the village and control local society.

Fig. 6 Structure of Leadership Organization at the Commune Level[16]



*The numbers in parentheses indicate posts held concurrently. (For example, First Deputy Secretary of the Party Committee (1) is also holding a post in the Legal Department of the Commune; the Second Deputy Secretary (2) also is the chief of the Finance Department, etc.)

Much like the commune, the agricultural planning function of the brigade had been simplified by 1964.[17] However, it continued to act as an intermediary between the commune and the teams in establishing production targets and quotas for taxes and

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16 Adapted from Barnett, *Cadres, Bureaucracy, and Political Power In Communist China*, p. 454.

17 At certain times, such as during the late 1960s, production responsibilities were reinstated into the hands of the brigade. David Zweig, *Agrarian Radicalism In China, 1968-1981*, Harvard East Asian Series 102, The Council On East Asian Studies at Harvard University, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 98-100.

compulsory grain sales. It oversaw the operation of local supply and marketing cooperatives and credit cooperatives and continued to manage non-agricultural economic enterprises too large for the teams to handle but not sufficiently important for the commune to run directly.[18] Through the public security system and the propaganda committee, it also handled mass persuasion and ideological control.

Below brigade level was the production team, usually consisting of approximately twenty to sixty families.[19] Since the early 1960s it had become the basic level of agricultural production. Each team was given a proportion of village land and its own draft animals, tools, and buildings. It allocated the labour of its members and distributed collective income according to the workpoint contribution of each member. Production team cadres were not excluded from this dependence on collective income as they continued to be paid from the team's coffers.

How much decison-making autonomy with respect to agricultural production the teams actually had is debatable.[20] The frequent communication between the team, the brigade and the commune enabled commune cadres to be involved in the process of agricultural production. Often higher (brigade or commune level) cadres would make it their business to visit teams to ensure that "correct" production levels were being maintained.[21] During the early years of the 1960s when private plots and free markets

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[18] Barnett, *Cadres, Bureaucracy, and Political Power In Communist China*, p. 373.

[19] There were great variation in the size of production teams throughout China. Even within the Pearl River Delta the range was substantial. Production teams in the Zengbu region numbered as many as sixty-four families per team while in Chen Village the numbers were as few as twenty-five. See Potter and Potter, *China's Peasants The Anthropology of a Revolution.* Chan, et al , *Chen Village.*

[20] For a cogent argument with respect to team autonomy and central state control see Birrell, "The Centralized Control of the Communes in the Post- "Great Leap" Period." pp. 400-446.

[21] Birrell, "The Centralized Control of the Communes in the Post- "Great Leap" Period." pp. 400-446.

were tolerated, team cadres were carefully watched by brigade and commune level cadres to prevent undue leniency towards private production at the expense of the collective. In addition, obligations to the state in the form of grain taxation and grain procurement sales prevented teams from having too much leeway in making production decisions. Grain taxation was set for a five year period, allowing teams to know what was due and owing. However, the amount of grain to be sold to the state in the form of"above quota sales"[22] was determined after each harvest. The amount to be sold was arrived at through a system of "bargaining" at each level of administration.[23] Production team leaders engaged in the bargaining with each other and the brigade leader. As the brigade leader would have bargained with the commune cadres beforehand, a fixed amount would already be set, leaving little room for negotiations among teams. What one team did not sell to the state another team would be forced to make up. Political pressure combined with peer pressure left team leaders little room to manoeuvre when hoping to sell a minimum amount of grain to the state.[24] Teams were also indirectly restricted in their choice of cropping patterns. Because the state demanded that procurement quotas and taxes be paid in grain, cash crops often had to be sacrificed for grain growing.[25] During the Cultural Revolution when the central state's emphasis on grain production reached its peak, the power of the team to decide what to grow became even more negligible.

The above description of the revamped organizational structure of the commune in

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[22] The above quota sales were in addition to the basic quota sales which were fixed originally for three years and after 1971, for five years. This, along with the agricultural tax, became known as the "tax and sales responsibility" and was dealt with separately from the above quota grain procurement sales. Oi, *State and Peasant In Contemporary China The Political Economy of Village Government*, p. 50.

[23] Oi, *State and Peasant In Contemporary China The Political Economy of Village Government*, p. 49-62.

[24] Oi, *State and Peasant In Contemporary China The Political Economy of Village Government*, p. 62.

[25] In the Pearl River Delta land previously used for citrus fruit crops was turned over to grain cropping. See Siu, *Agents and Victims*.

the post-Great Leap era illustrates the way in which the CCP retained its hold on economic behaviour in the countryside. This mechanism of control also meant that peasant life was affected by the intense "struggle between the two lines" amongst leaders of the central state in the 1960s and 1970s. On the one hand, there was what Madsen terms the "Maoist moral paradigm", based on the early writings of Mao.[26] According to this interpretation of Marxist-Leninism, people were not selfish by nature. However, as greed and selfishness did exist, as a residue from past structures of feudalism and capitalism, members of society had to be taught to "serve the people with utter devotion." On the other hand, there were leaders such as Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping whose interpretation was more deterministically Marxist. They believed that with socialist economic development, people would become automatically less selfish.[27]

In the aftermath of the Great Leap Forward, the Liuist camp, or the "revisionists"as they were known in the Cultural Revolution, successfully initiated economic policies that stimulated rural production. As noted in Chapter Four, private plots were reallocated to peasant households, enabling peasants to grow their own vegetables and raise their own chickens and pigs. Rural markets were permitted once again. The state also encouraged communes and brigades to run local industries for profit and urged production teams to grow commercial crops for profit rather than subsistence. As a result of these measures, the Chinese version of the Green Revolution started to take hold with new strains of high-yield short-stalk rice varieties being produced and chemical fertilizers being made widely available. The dissemination of the new seed strains and accompanying growing

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[26] Such works included "In Memory of Norman Bethune." *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung,* 4 vols. (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1961-65), 2:337-39; "Combat Liberalism." *Selected Works,* 2:31-35, "On Correcting Mistaken Ideas in the Party." *Selected Works*, 1:105-17, "Rectify the Party's Style of Work." *Selected Works*, 3:35-53.

[27] Lowell Dittmer, "The Radical Critique of Political Interest:1966-1978." *Modern China* , 6, Vol. 4, (1980), pp. 363-96.

techniques quickened production.[28] Some teams were even bold enough to experiment with household responsibility systems, in which households were allotted land to work and manage in their own way.[29]

By the mid-1960s however, Mao's followers were increasingly dissatisfied with the Liuist methods of raising production. State ideology became radically Maoist, denouncing "capitalist tendencies" in the rural areas and the emergence of "rich peasant mentality".[30] The Maoist line had two major thrusts. The first tenet was that collective economy should take priority over household economy. Peasants should concentrate on team farming and not on their own private endeavours. As the goal was economic equality, individuals or households in the team were not supposed to advance independently. The team was to provide the setting in which players could collectively take rational control of their common economic destinies.[31] Peasants should be bound to their teams, to do collective public works and to labour in the collective fields or collective industries. It was not just a strategy of economic development but also a matter of political and moral control. Peasants who did not work collectively should not eat. In addition, surplus production should be allowed no longer to be sold in rural open markets but to the state at fixed low

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[28] Dwight Perkins and Shabid Yusuf, *Rural Development in China* , (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), pp. 53-55.

[29] These household responsibility systems resembled the system in the post-Mao era in effect). See Zhou, *How The Farmers Changed China: Power of the People*, pp. 48-51.

[30] Vogel points out that hunger and exhaustion caused by the Great Leap Forward had left people volatile and difficult to discipline. It was not until 1961 that this condition began to stablize. See Vogel, *Canton Under Communism*, pp. 287-89.

[31] Potter and Potter, *China's Peasants The Anthropology of a Revolution.*, pp. 95-96.

prices.[32]

The second Maoist tenet was that every commune should be totally self-reliant. Mao rejected the concept of specialized production based on comparative advantage and the necessity for horizontal trade in rural areas. In every commune, collective farming was supposed to provide all the necessary food while collective industries should process food crops and produce all necessary items by using locally-generated resources. Trade with other communes should not be allowed. Commune self-reliance would enable China's rural regions to operate independently as an added defense measure against foreign aggression.[33]

The Maoist moral and political discourse was projected to society through successive political, ideological and economic campaigns. However, not every campaign successfully reached down into village society. Political campaigns like the Anti-Liu Shaoqi Campaign (1966) or the Anti-Lin Biao, Anti-Confucius Campaign (1973), had little effect on the peasants for life in the village was far removed from the political battles being fought in Beijing. By contrast, class struggle and the ideological and economic campaigns conducted during this period, for example the Four Clean-ups (1964-65), the Three Loyalties (1968), the Cleansing of Class Ranks (1968-69) and Learning From Dazhai (1964-73) campaigns had an enormous effect on the peasants.

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[32] It should be pointed out that the Maoist ideology came to the foreground gradually. In many areas the moral discourse described above was not implemented until the Cultural Revolution years (1966-69). See Potter and Potter, *China's Peasants The Anthropology of a Revolution.* Chan, et al, *Chen Village.*

[33] Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution Vol. 2: The Great Leap Forward, 1958-1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), pp. 132-135.

Chapter Five - The Later Mao Years and Peasant Resistance

This chapter looks at state-peasant relationship in China during the Mao years, 1962 to 1978. This period marks an open conflict between Mao and his opponents - conflict that was often elevated to the ideological realm. In this sense, this period can be considered as 'politics in command'.

In this chapter I cannot provide a comparative study between the North China Plain and the Pearl River Delta, as I could in previous chapters. Until the 1980s most of China was completely cut off from western contact and no research was possible between 1949 and 1978. The only source of interview data was obtained from research conducted in Hong Kong with immigrants and refugees, most of whom came from south China and not the North China Plain.[1] In general, criticism of emigre studies points to problems of selectivity and bias.[2] The works I am relying on, however, stand as testaments to the value of such studies. They are the products of conscientious researchers who took potential problems of bias into account. They contributed much when few alternatives existed. As for north China, records and reports from the late 1960s and early 1970s are still now difficult, if not impossible, to obtain. Many village reports and accounting records were lost during the Cultural Revolution, thereby denying researchers the use of much information. Where information is available it usually treats history and economics rather than social relations. [3] For this chapter, I must rely primarily on the ethnographic

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[1] Such studies include Chan, et al., *Chen Village Under Mao and Deng.* Vogel,*Canton Under Communism: Programs and Politics in a Provincial Capital, 1949-1968.* Parish and Whyte, *Village and Family in Contemporary China.*

[2] Parish and Whyte,*Village and Family in Contemporary China*, Appendix One.

[3] Ishida Hiroshi, *Historical Perspectives On Chinese Rural Economy* (Kiensai University Press, 1991).

The Socialist Education Movement (1962-65)[34] was aimed at "private profiteers" and corrupt rural cadres. Mao suspected that there was also rampant corruption on the part of brigade and team leaders as a result of economic pragmatism encouraged by Liu and other top Party leaders.[35] Mao wanted to deal with the cadres before he tackled the rich peasant mentality so he had the Central Committee of the Party issue a series of directives. These were the 'First Ten Points' (May 1963), the 'Later Ten Points' (September 1963), the 'Revised Later Ten Points' (September 1964), and the 'Twenty-Three Articles' (January, 1965).[36] Local cadres became targets of a series of rectification campaigns and were told to engage in intensive study of Party doctrines and policies and undergo vigorous "criticism and self-criticism" to correct their flawed ways.

To conduct these rectification campaigns, work teams, usually made up of Party members, were sent into the countryside from the urban areas.[37] As the work team members were outsiders they relied upon villagers to report the misdeeds of the cadres.

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[34] Although labelled a mass movement or *qunzhong yundong* the Socialist Education Movement like most other political campaigns in communist China, was really a carefully controlled campaign designed to promote central state ideology. Participation was not voluntary but mandatory. See Steven W. Mosher, *Broken Earth .The Rural Chinese* (New York: The Free Press, 1983), pp. 262-284.

[35] It was at this time that Deng Xiaoping first used the controversial euphemism, "Black cats, white cats, what does it matter? So long as they can catch rats, they are good cats!" See Richard Baum, *Prelude to Revolution Mao, The Party and The Peasant Question 1962-66* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), pp. 1-9.

[36] For a complete translation of these directives See Richard Baum and Frederick C. Teiwes, *Ssu-Ch'ing. The Socialist Education Movement of 1962-1966*, Centre for Chinese Studies, (Berkeley: University of California, 1968).

[37] Work teams, it has been argued, were used at the instigation of Liu Shaoqi to keep the campaign within the Party's control. Unlike Mao's position that the campaign was to "set the masses in motion", Liu felt that a grassroots campaign would threaten stable government and bureaucratic power. Work teams as central state representatives could be used to supervise the masses during the movement. See Meisner, *Mao's China A History of the People's Republic.*, p. 291.

Work teams lived and laboured alongside the poorest villagers and worked hard at winning the confidence of the peasants. They revitalized the poor and lower peasant associations to enlist the most politically sympathetic peasants.[38] Since poor and lower-middle peasants were not targets of the campaigns, they were expected to offer information concerning corrupt cadres as well as to criticize their local leaders publicly.

Initially a majority of poor and lower-middle peasants were loath to cooperate with the work teams during the Socialist Education Movement, fearing later retribution of the cadres being condemned. Publicly denouncing local cadres also violated the peasants' traditional sense of community. How could a peasant 'struggle' against a rural cadre who was not only a fellow villager, but in many cases, kin?[39] Those who did participate often used the struggle sessions for their own ends. Some cadres felt that their own skins could be saved by pointing a finger at their colleagues. Some peasants used the campaigns to settle unresolved past grievances.[40] It was the village youths who were generally most eager to play the part of political activist. Under the direction of the local militia, they often led the struggle sessions. As Madsen points out, unlike their parents, these youths could participate in the struggle sessions without compromising their sense of duty to community.[41]

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[38] These poor and lower peasant associations were also used by the central state to oversee the conduct of rural cadres with respect to state policy implementation. See Meisner, *Mao's China A History of the People's Republic*, p. 291

[39] See Chan, et al *Chen Village*, pp. 49-73.

[40] Chan, et al, *Chen Village.* Siu, *Agents and Victims.*

[41] Richard Madsen, "Harnessing the Political Potential of Peasant Youth." Victor Nee and David Mozingo (eds.) *State and Society In Contemporary China* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp. 244-265. Victor Nee, "Between Center and Locality: State, Militia, and Village." Victor Nee and David Mozingo (eds.), *State and Society In Contemporary China* (Ithaca, N.Y.:Cornell University Press, 1983),pp.223-243.

Socialist education did not end with the Small and Big Four Cleanups Campaigns, for Mao then decided that the time was ripe to deal with the rich peasant mentality.[42] Local historical records were published and discussed as a means of keeping alive the memories of exploitation that peasants had suffered at the hands of class enemies: the "four bad types" - former landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, and other assorted "bad elements." All rural households had to undergo a general reclassification and Party members were to be registered.[43] The Socialist Education Movement was designed to teach cadres and the masses about what was considered correct morality in a socialist society. The initial years of the post-Leap period, a golden time of prosperity and relative economic freedom, were superseded by a time of bitter battling between work teams and rural cadres. Nevertheless, there was not yet a general reshaping of the Liuist political order. Because of a lack of alternatives, the publicly disgraced local cadres were often reinstated.[44] The campaign was also of negligible consequence to the peasants. Only the murmurings of change were felt.

By 1966, however Mao felt that his attempt to keep alive the spirit of "revolution" was being hampered by bureaucratic obstructionism by top Party leaders.[45] To

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[42] The Socialist Education Movement also included campaigns such as Study Mao Zedong Thought, Struggle Against the Capitalist Roaders, and Attacking the Four Olds. See Chan et al, *Chen Village*.

[43] This revitalization of class struggle was a prelude to the state-endorsed spirit of seeking out spies and saboteurs among fellow villagers during the Cultural Revolution. Baum and Teiwes, *Ssu-Ch'ing: The Socialist Education Movement of 1962-1966*, p. 47.

[44] Siu, *Agents and Victims*, pp. 198-204.

[45] For example, leaders such as Liu Shaoqi promoted the socialist education of rural cadres but under the direct guidance of the Party, contrary to Mao's philosophy of listening to the masses. See Nee, "Between Center and Locality: State, Militia, and Village." pp. 223-243.

circumvent the civil administration, Mao turned to the Army[46] and set about reshaping society through a "cultural revolution". Many scholars[47] have focused on the Cultural Revolution as an urban affair,with anarchic demonstrations of violence and bloody confrontations between Red Guard factions played out in the city centres. Many have tended to minimize its impact on rural society, seeing the countryside as the place where the "capitalist roaders" from the cities were sent for reeducation. I do not agree with this view. While it is true that the political eruption in urban society was more violent, the Cultural Revolution did have a major effect on the countryside. Mao wanted to complete his task of erasing "revisionist"[48] tendencies in the rural areas, since the Socialist Education Movement had been blocked by Liu and Deng. This desire led to social, cultural and economic upheavals in the villages which were powerful factors in the way the peasants behaved during the 1970s and reverberated long after the Cultural Revolution ended.

One of the Cultural Revolution campaigns that affected peasants' livelihood

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46 The Army was under the direct command of Lin Biao who not only held the position of number two cadre in China (Mao being number one) but was responsible for orchestrating the campaign to venerate Mao. See William F. Dorrill, "Power, Policy and Ideology in the Making of the Chinese Cultural Revolution." In Thomas W. Robinson, (ed.), *The Cultural Revolution in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 54-55.

47 Richard Baum, "The Cultural Revolution in the Countryside: Anatomy of a Limited Rebellion." Thomas W. Robinson (ed.), *The Cultural Revolution in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 367-476.

48 Revisionism, according to Mao was the abandonment of revolutionary goals and the use of specialists and experts culminating in bureaucratic authoritarianism, an increasing stratification between manual and mental labourers and an accumulation of material goods which would lead to the restoration of capitalism. Mao's position of guarding against revisionism was , to some extent, in reaction to the Soviet Union under Krushchev whereby Mao perceived the ideals of socialist government had been compromised by corrupt bureaucratism. See John King Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution: 1800-1985* New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1986), p. 319 and Lowell Dittmer, *China's Continuous Revolution The Post-Liberation Epoch 1949-1981* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 154-55.

adversely was: "Taking Grain As the Key Link" (*yi liang wei gang*)[49] which aimed at promoting commune self-sufficiency in grain.[50] Even land which was traditionally used for cash crops, like citrus in the countryside in the Pearl River Delta and cotton in the North China Plain, had to be converted to grain production in order to meet high grain tax and procurement quotas. For communes with much arable land well-suited to growing grain the policy of self-sufficiency was not too onerous. Even so, teams that gave up cash cropping for grain production often experienced a drop in living standards because the return for grain was much less than for commercial crops.[51] For communes which had land that was not suitable for grain growing the result was constant food shortages and starvation because other food crops were not allowed to replace grain production.[52]

To ensure fair treatment, the Maoist government used "basic grain" as a criterion to classify production teams into three categories: grain-surplus, grain-sufficient, and grain-deficit. "Basic grains" were set at three hundred and sixty *jin* of unhusked grain per person annually.[53] Those who produced more than this amount were considered grain

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[49] This phrase was first articulated during the Great Leap Forward reflecting the central state's philosophy of local self-sufficiency. Lardy, *Agriculture in China's Modern Economic Development*, p. 41.

[50] Blecher and Wang Shaoguang, "The Political Economy of Cropping in Maoist and Dengist China."

[51] This was true in regions such as Hebei where grain was able to grow reasonably well and, in turn, satisfied the needs of the commune and fulfilled state procurement quotas and taxes. However, it resulted in a drop in the standard of living for the peasants. Blecher and Wang, "The Political Economy of Cropping in Maoist and Dengist China."

[52] This policy was particularly troublesome in north China where sideline industries were crucial to commune production and in other areas where farming was marginal and sideline occupations provided most of a peasant's income. See Oi, *State and Peasant in Contemporary China The Political Economy of Village Government*. p. 111. Ishida Hiroshi, *Historical Perspectives On Chinese Rural Economy*. Potter and Potter, *China's Peasants The Anthropology of a Revolution*., p. 92.

[53] This figure falls below the international standard of relief organizations. See Walker, *Food Grain Procurement and Consumption in China*, pp.79-81.

surplus teams and were obliged to sell grain to the state. Those that had just enough for basic grains did not need to sell grain to the state but were not necessarily eligible for relief. Those below "basic grain" level did not have to sell grain to the state and were eligible for relief. Unfortunately the classification was never modified from the beginning of the Cultural Revolution through to the end of 1978 even though conditions changed.[54] As a result, grain-surplus teams which experienced a poor harvest were still expected to sell a large portion to the state while grain-sufficient or deficit teams which had good years enjoyed the unfair advantage of legally being able to avoid selling grain to the state.[55]

In anticipation of resistance, the central state altered the structure of leadership to ensure compliance. As much as possible, team leaders were chosen from rural cadres who could be trusted to follow the "correct ideology." The militia was used to reinforce the new Maoist discourse.[56] Work teams were repeatedly sent into villages to "squat" for a time and help enforce central state policies. When upper level government was in chaos because of factional fights, an interim administration, the Revolutionary Committee, was created in 1967 to oversee the work of each brigade and production team. Made up of young activists, members of the militia, and representatives of the poor peasants, this committee replaced the former commune administration. As they were self-proclaimed champions of Maoism, they would be expected to faithfully enforce his revolutionary lines.

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[54] Oi, *State and Peasant in Contemporary China The Political Economy of Village Government*, p. 47.

[55] As Oi points out, however, it was unlikely that teams which were categorized as 'grain deficit' but had a surplus were allowed to retain an over abundance of grain for use. Oi, *State and Peasant in Contemporary China The Political Economy of Village Government*, pp. 48-49.

[56] Throughout the Cultural Revolution the militia, under the direction of the People's Liberation Army, played a vital role with respect to reshaping society. It is interesting to note that when factional struggles got out of hand during the Cultural Revolution decade, it was the local militia who helped protect the villages from the Revolution's worst disruptions. See Nee, "Between Center and Locality: State, Militia, and Village." pp. 223-243.

Another means used to promote Maoist morality during the Cultural Revolution was to conduct periodic attacks on the "Three Freedoms": reducing the size of or abolishing the private plots, curtailing rural markets, forcing households to turn over private animals to the collective and transforming private sideline production into collectively-run industries.[57] The "Learn from Dazhai" campaign was a notable attempt to get peasants all over China to follow the Maoist model of collective self-reliance and forgo the Three Freedoms. Dazhai[58] was a brigade in Shanxi province, north China, which supposedly became the leading producer of grain even though it faced almost insurmountable natural obstacles. The Maoist media seized the story of Dazhai and held it up as a shining example for all production brigades to emulate. The Dazhai system represented an ideological commitment to working hard for the sake of the collective rather than for household economic rewards. Importance was placed on the self-reliance of each local community and the importance of peasants conquering nature, overcoming hardship and natural disasters on their own.

The campaign of "Learning From Dazhai" took four forms. Firstly, it was used to promote a heavy commitment of labour in opening new land for grain production or other infrastructure work. If new land was not available, the peasants were told to be creative. Fish ponds[59] were to be filled and hilltops were to be levelled to expand arable acreage.[60] Secondly, this campaign was used to promote the amalgamation of production teams,

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57 William G. Skinner, "Rural Marketing in China: Repression and Revival." *The China Quarterly*, Vol. 103, (1985), pp.393-413.

58 After the death of Mao in 1976 Deng Xiaoping and his colleagues publicly repudiated Dazhai, denouncing its accomplishments as fraudulent. By 1983 Dazhai was completely reorganized. See William Hinton, "Dazhai Revisited." *Monthly Review*, Vol. 39, (March 1988), pp. 34-50.

59 Potter and Potter, *China's Peasants The Anthropology of a Revolution.*, p. 92.

60 Chan, et al, *Chen Village*, p. 94.

which would lead to reinstating the brigade as the basic unit of agricultural production. As Dazhai used the brigade as the basic unit of accounting, it was thought the rest of China should follow suit. This would serve two purposes. It would eliminate the gap between rich and poor teams; and it would mean greater power and control by the central state over food production. Thirdly, the Learning from Dazhai campaign was used to promote a more egalitarian system of remuneration based on pacesetter work points, personal reporting and public assessment".[61] Under this system, skilled and politically dedicated workers would be chosen as pacesetter models for one month. They were the first ones to declare in public how many work points they thought they should get. This became the criterion by which every other member was measured. A public discussion would follow to evaluate each group member's claim for work points. They would measure themselves and others against the model workers, taking into account work quality and effort and political attitude, before work points were finally awarded. The same procedure repeated itself every month. This system was essentially egalitarian as the number of work points assigned would be within a one or two point range. It also awarded work points according to moral enthusiasm instead of physical strength. Fourthly, this campaign was also a veiled attract on the Three Freedoms. Dazhai had abolished private plots. There was no free market, and almost no private sidelines. To follow this model, peasants all over China were told to devote their sideline products to the commune instead of selling them in the free markets.[62]

The Learn from Dazhai campaign was the last economic campaign employed by

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[61] Selden, Mark (ed.) *The People's Republic of China: A Documentary History of Revolutionary Change*, Monthly Review Press, p. 612.

[62] Chan, et al, *Chen Village*, pp. 90-97.

Mao to push his political line. With the fall of Lin Biao in 1971[63], apathy set in among his agents such as the sent-down youth, the People's Liberation Army, and the work-teams. How could one not be skeptical when Mao's most loyal comrade, Lin Biao, was not what he seemed? Thereafter few took pride in being "Mao's Children". The hypocrisy of the situation left the entire polity from top to bottom suspect and, to make matters worse, both rural cadres and peasants lost faith in the central state. Their lives had not improved, as had been promised. In fact, at the height of the Cultural Revolution their standard of living plummeted.[64] The gains made between 1962-66 were lost. Various agricultural breakthroughs associated with the Green Revolution of the early 1960s were undermined even with the expanded use of electrical pumps and the extension of irrigation.[65] Peasants in poorer regions of China in particular suffered from what Huang has termed "collectivist involution".[66] Commune self-reliance, total restrictions of rural to urban migration and Mao's pro-natalist policies meant that more and more labourers were working on the same amount of land. Any agricultural growth was cancelled out because of increasing number of people living off the harvests.

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[63] In 1971, at the height of power, the central party announced that Lin Biao had betrayed Mao and, subsequently, met his death in a plane crash. For a thorough discussion on the events surrounding this affair see Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions China From The 1800s to the 1980s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 366-372.

[64] Siu, *Agents and Victims*, pp. 227-28. It should be stressed that not all communes suffered the same level of grain extraction and that contradictory findings emphasize the importance of not generalizing with respect to regional studies. For contrary findings see Philip Huang, *The Peasant Family and Rural Development in the Yangzi Delta, 1350- 1988.* (Stanford, Calif..: Stanford University Press, 1990).

[65] During the Cultural Revolution agricultural research was interrupted and progress in the development of improved seed strains came to halt. Although chemical fertlizers continued to be locally produced in small-scale plants the nutrient content of these chemical fertlizers, such as ammonium bicarbonate, was marginal. See Perkins and Yusuf, *Rural Development in China*, pp. 53-55. Chan, et al, *Chen Village*, pp. 236-37.

[66] Huang, *The Peasant Family and Rural Development in the Yangzi Delta 1350-1988*, pp. 16-17, 315-317.

How did peasants and lower level cadres react to Maoist campaigns which ran counter to the interests of their community and households during this period? I believe they followed similar lines of "everyday forms of resistance" described in Scott's work on Southeast Asia.[67] According to Scott, when resources are in short supply and open political action is too dangerous, covert activities such as "foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, feigned ignorance, desertion, pilfering, smuggling, poaching, arson, slander, sabotage ..."[68] are techniques commonly used by oppressed people as a means of survival. Although not an openly declared political act by any individual or group, resistance of this kind is a stratagem used by a weaker party to thwart the claims of a more powerful class of or an institutional opponent.

In reading through the existing literature, I have found notable examples of peasants and local cadres defending family interests against the state. An example can be seen during the Three Loyalties[69] campaign (1968), when the state insisted that all privately owned fruit trees and bamboo groves were to be handed over to the team. Peasant household members reacted by chopping off bamboo stalks and eating the fruits before relinquishing the trees to the collective government.[70] In south China, even in the midst of the Maoist crack down on the Three Freedoms, individual peasants surreptitiously engaged

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67 Scott, *Weapons of the Weak Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance.*

68 James Scott, "Everyday Forms of Resistance." *Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New York: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1989), p. 5.

69 To promote the cult of Mao the Party brought in the 'Three Loyalties Campaign' . This campaign instructed the people to pledge allegiance to the "three loyalties" - loyalty to Mao, to Mao's thought, and to his revolutionary line. Richard Madsen, *Morality and Power in a Chinese Village*, p. 186.

70 Chan et al, *Chen Village*, p. 171.

in pig rearing or spent extra hours working their private plots.[71] In order to help the family make ends meet, members of a poor production team quietly portioned out their team land to each individual household. In this example, the family unit grew enough grain to fulfil state taxes and procurement quotas and kept the remaining harvest. These sorts of measures obviously required complicity on the part of the team leader and possibly of the brigade leader. In fact, in many villages when there was no work-team around, the local cadres would let peasants farm their private plots while giving the appearance of vigorous collective farming.[72] Peasants and local cadres also engaged in illegal black marketing, selling surplus grain on the black market to other production teams who were covertly growing cash crops but needing grain to fulfil state grain quotas and taxes.[73] In north China, passive resistance in favour of family interests also took the form of unauthorized migration or what Scott would call desertion.[74] According to one study during the Cultural Revolution over two-thirds of the Shandong migrants were peasants moving away from their communities to escape the turmoil at home. Many of these people went to remote wilderness regions where they would be free to settle and live off the land.[75]

The existing literature also documents cases of how local cadres and peasants defended their local community and production teams by resisting central state directives as

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[71] Shue, *Reach of the State*, pp.139-40. Blecher and Wang, "The Political Economy of Cropping in Maoist and Dengist China." Oi, *State and Peasant in Contemporary China The Political Economy of Village Government*. Chapter Ten.

[72] David Zweig, "Struggling over land in China: Peasant Resistance after Collectivization 1966-1986." Colburn, Forrest D. (ed.) *Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New York: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1989), p. 159.

[73] Oi, *State and Peasant in Contemporary China The Political Economy of Village Government*, p. 98.

[74] Scott, "Everyday Forms of Resistance." pp. 13-14.

[75] Lary, "Hidden Migrations: Movement of Shandong People," p. 67.

much as possible. One example of these tactics can be seen during the Cleansing of Class Ranks[76] campaign (1968-69), when peasants were pushed into struggling against Liuists in the village. They made the "sent-down" youth[77] into targets so as to avoid pointing their fingers at kin and neighbours. Another example can be seen in south China's resistance to the state's attempts at amalgamating production teams during the Learn from Dazhai campaign in the early 1970s. Not wishing to abandon team loyalties and be part of a larger group, the peasants and local cadres resisted by reducing their amount of energy expended in the fields, thus forcing the state to change its plans.[78]

Resistance to central state directives also occurred in a less dramatic and systematic way. Team cadres wishing to avoid state procurement quotas would under-report output while seeking ways to get more resources, such as fertilizers and pesticides, from the state. Both brigade and team cadres dragged their feet when making reports to higher administrative levels, and secretly directed their production teams to plant cash crops for

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[76] 'Cleansing of the Class Ranks' was an ideological campaign which was implemented during the Cultural Revolution. It was designed to reinforce 'class struggle' through the rectification of persons who did not adhere to Maoist principles. The official list of those targeted was vague allowing much room for local interpretation. See Madsen, *Morality and Power in a Chinese Village*, p. 179-181.

[77] The sent-down youth were young people from the cities who volunteered to go to the countryside to live among and learn from the peasants and in return, practice and preach Mao's moral teachings. See Madsen, *Morality and Power in a Chinese Village*, Chapter 4.

[78] The amalgamation of production teams in Chen Village is a good example of a partial solution to the hostility towards this policy. See Chan et al, *Chen Village*, pp. 169-174, 196-200. In the north hostility to the policy does not appear to have been as extreme as in the south. Among teams that had a relative degree of equality, there appears to have been a greater acceptance of reorganization and in areas where there were wide discrepancies the intense drive of the state to implement this policy overrode objections. Rural enterprises at the Brigade level provided team members with economic resources that were sufficient to allow teams to merge their resources at the brigade level and not suffer economic losses. See Judd, *Gender and Power in Rural North China*, pp. 6-8. Zweig, "Struggling over Land in China," pp. 98-104.

local use instead of taking grain as the key link.[79] In one of the communes in south China for example, local cadres allowed peasants to grow tobacco instead of grain for personal consumption on the hilly land.[80] In Hebei, local cadres allowed peasants to grow cotton at the expense of grain.[81]

One of the reasons for passive resistance at the communal level was, ironically, Mao's insistence on local self-reliance. The fate of peasants and cadres in the same team, brigade and commune became intertwined in this cellular economy.[82] The physical coalition and social insularity of communes increased the chance that tactics of passive resistance against central government economic directives, outlined above, could succeed. Successful resistance, of course, depended on the degree of administration, the control and the political fate of Mao's external agents such as work teams and sent-down youths. For example, deviation was possible particularly during the peak year of the Cultural Revolution, 1967, because Provincial, County and Commune governance became so chaotic. However once the period of near anarchy was over and the newly set-up Revolutionary Committee, dominated by the military, was firmly in control at the Provincial, County and Commune levels, brigade and team cadres were made to toe the Party line or were removed to make way for more obedient local leaders.

Not all rural cadres worked in defence of their communities. This was particularly true if their collectives were so close to the seat of government that it was unrealistic to

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79 Zweig, "Struggling over land in China: Peasant Resistance after Collectivization 1966-1986." pp. 151-174.

80 *Ibid.* p.158.

81 Blecher and Wang, "The Political Economy of Cropping in Maoist and Dengist China," p. 63-98.

82 Audrey Donnithorne, "China's Cellular Economy: Some Economic Trends since the Cultural Revolution." *China Quarterly*, No. 52, (1972), pp. 605-19.

resist the reach of the state. Under these circumstances, many cadres manipulated state policies to serve their own ends. Team leaders could build clientalistic connections with brigade, commune or county officials while brigade administrations would build relations with commune cadres and brigade Party bosses.[83] These leaders would totally ignore the welfare of the peasants within their jurisdiction, by forcing them to follow central directives to the letter.

Conclusion:

Beginning in 1962 with a strong move by the Liu and Deng group in Beijing to scale down the Maoist utopia while still promoting collective agriculture under the commune system, this period ended with the abandonment of collective agriculture in 1978. In the intervening years a number of things happened which had a lasting effect on the rural populace. Initially, team farming and the "household registration system" led to the development of strong collective spirit among the peasants as they lived and worked in their communities. This had the effect of reinforcing communal and lineage solidarity among the peasantry which ironically could be used as a base to defy the state, a consequence that the central state had not anticipated. By late 1960s and early 1970s life for the peasant had not improved, as a predicted benefit of collective agriculture. Indeed, not only did life not improve, it became worse. With the increasingly oppressive economic policies imposed by the central state, peasants and local cadres turned to "passive resistance". This involved covert actions by individuals and team/brigade cadres but ultimately depended on the complicity of the community. That the peasants could resist the state was owing to a strange combination of family and community spirit. While it was deemed moral to defend one's family interests, it was also deemed moral on the part of

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83 Oi, *State and Peasant in Contemporary China The Political Economy of Village Government*..

community members not to expose one another to the central state.[84]

At the same time, the central state became more fanatical. With Liu and Deng losing the political battle, political ideology, or the veneration of Mao, came to guide all state decisions including those of an economic and social nature. To indoctrinate the rural populace with the new political ideology the central state conducted endless political and ideological campaigns by means of external agents such as the (i) work teams, (ii) sent-down youths, and (iii) People's Liberation Army units. Under the watchful eyes of these external agents, villagers were expected to spy on and publicly denounce their neighbours in class struggle sessions.[85] Communal solidarity was tested beyond reasonable limits and the collective spirit was seriously threatened. By the end of the 1970s, according to the village studies examined in this chapter, peasants had lost their belief in collective production and Maoist ideology on the one hand, and community spirit on the other.[86] Ironically, the essential aim of Maoist ideology, a truly egalitarian and collective society, was destroyed by the central state's own struggle for power and its fanatical intrusion into peasant society.

Is this the moral or the rational peasant reacting to state intrusion? Nee explains the dismantling of team farming and the subsequent reversal to family farming as a consequence of the rational peasants' preference for 'peasant household individualism.' According to this line of argument, peasants are rationally calculating that household production is better than collective production when there is an adequate supply of

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[84] Zweig, "Struggling over Land in China: Peasant Resistance after Collectivization, 1966-1986."

[85] Madsen, *Morality and Power in a Chinese Village*, Chapters Six and Seven.

[86] Chan et al, *Chen Village*. Madsen, *Morality and Power in a Chinese Village*. Potter and Potter, *China's Peasants The Anthropology of a Revolution*. Siu, *Agents and Victims*.

household labour.[87] I disagree with Nee because even on grounds of economic advantage collective production, at the team level[88] , was not unreasonable to the Chinese peasant. As noted in chapter four, during the period of lower APCs (1953-55), group farming was embraced by many peasants.[89] In less fertile areas where small plot farming produced marginal returns the coordination of team farming made perfect sense.[90] I think peasants abandoned collective agriculture because of the continual intrusion of the state. Class struggle campaigns continually picked away at community solidarity to the point where even team loyalties were eroded. Campaigns, such as "Taking Grain as the Key Link", demanded authoritative farming practices which robbed the production teams of the chance to make sound decisions as a group and resulting in an overall lowering of living standards and in many cases absolute poverty. It is not surprising that decollectivization first took hold in the poorer regions of China.[91] For both moral and rational reasons, team farming might well have succeeded had the state left peasants alone to make economic decisions according to local conditions and comparative advantage. Traditional kinship and community morality would not necessarily have ensured the Maoist aim of equality but it would have ensured continual economic cooperation.

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87 Nee, "Peasant Household Individualism," p. 167.

88 I suggest that collective farming organized within a larger framework, such as the brigade or commune in the south and the commune in the north, was not conducive to successful collective production. This argument is based on peasants reaction to collective farming during the Great Leap Forward and the subsequent attempt at reorganization during the Three Loyalties Campaign. See Madsen, Richard (1984) pp. 185-86. and Yang, Dali L. (1996) pp. 21-41.

89 William Hinton, *Fanshen: A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village* (New York: Vintage, 1966).

90 Friedman et al, *Chinese Village Socialist State.*

91 Judd, Ellen (1994) p. 7.

Chapter Six - Agrarian Reforms and the New World of the Peasant

By the late 1970s the Mao years had come to an end. The Maoist policies of the previous two decades were replaced by new state polices which followed an economically "pragmatic" approach called by some "economics in command". These policies were designed with several objectives in mind. They were to increase and diversify agricultural production, to improve management of the rural collective economy and to increase peasant incomes in order to boost the regime's popularity. As the changes took effect, they brought a radical alteration in state-peasant relations.

This chapter examines the reforms of Deng Xiaoping and reflects upon the reaction of peasant society to them during the years 1978 to 1992.[1] I will start by giving an account of the central state's economic, administrative and demographic reforms which had effects at the three levels of the peasant household, the local community, and the national level respectively. To benefit the peasant household, the reforms have included the abolition of team farming, a more lenient procurement and taxation system, the reopening of rural markets, and giving peasants permission to freely engage in sidelines and non-agricultural occupations, to establish residence in small towns, and to engage in long distance trade. To benefit the local community, reforms have included a drastic decentralization of local governance, a new system of control that separates administrative, ideological, and economic functions, and the revamping of collective industries into profit-making enterprises. To benefit the nation, the central state formulated the "one-child" policy to arrest the burgeoning population growth. As these three types of reform were introduced, peasants and local cadres formed their own strategies to increase their benefits and

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[1] I have taken this study up to Spring 1992, before Deng Xiaoping made his celebrated tour to southern China, which inaugurated a new era of reform and open door policies, the implications of which are still not fully documented. An examination of the Tianamen Incident is not included here because the "structure" of rural China was largely unaffected by this event, even though the central government at that point had threatened to recollectivize agriculture, and its economic retrenchment program led to the bankruptcy of many private and collective enterprises.

minimize their risks. In going through the existing literature of this period, I come to the conclusion that although the central state continued to intrude into rural society, the ability of peasants and local cadres to resist such intrusion was greater during the Deng era than it was at the height of the Mao years. Such resistance sometimes caused the central state to redefine rural policies. As in the previous chapters, I shall draw examples from the North China Plain and the Pearl River Delta regions to illustrate my points.[2]

From 1977 to 1978, the central state, under the leadership of Mao's designated successor, Hua Guofeng, did not radically change policy. Instead, it adopted a moderate form of 'developmental Maoism' that advocated promoting the 'spirit of revolution' through local and regional self-reliance. This was accompanied by a directive for the nationwide emulation of model communes such as Dazhai.[3] The 'general line' of 'going all out, aiming high to achieve greater, faster, better and more economical results in building socialism' was reiterated. The basic aims were to increase agricultural output by 4.5 percent per annum and industrial output by 10 percent. State investment continued to emphasize heavy industry, though lip service was paid to light industry.[4] The Party continued to dominate administration at all levels and the commune system was retained.

In the meantime, absolute poverty seemed to have gripped much of China's

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[2] Unlike during the Mao era when research was largely limited to emigre interviews, today's China has reopened to field work. Studies such as Judd's work in Shandong and Lin's work in the Pearl River Delta provide a wealth of material to draw from and use in comparing north and south China. See Judd, *Gender and Power in Rural North China.* George Lin, *Red Capitalism in South China Growth and Development of the Pearl River Delta* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997).

[3] Gordon White, *Riding the Tiger The Politics of Economic Reform in Post-Mao China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), pp. 24-25.

[4] *Ibid.* p. 27.

countryside.[5] Although attempts were made to increase production through the introduction of a wide variety of modern technologies[6], the increase was apparently slow, less than 2 percent per year. This barely kept ahead of population growth and, with the additional costs of agricultural inputs, rural peasant income did not rise.[7] Peasants reacted to poverty by passive resistance to directives and by continuing to deal directly with team and brigade cadres and ignoring the central state.[8]

Things began to change in December 1978 when under the banner of 'practice is the sole criterion of truth,'[9]Deng Xiaoping and his allies successfully challenged Hua Guofeng. Deng Xiaoping's rise to power was accompanied by the development of a new pragmatic socialist political economy which emphasized reorganizing rural life. The four-bad class labels were officially expunged in early 1979, thereby releasing over 4 million former landlords and rich peasants who had born the stigma for the past thirty years. Class struggle ceased to be a feature of rural life and ideological cleansing campaigns became a rarity. With the opening of China to international trade and investment, the state began to experiment with basing social life on the rule of law. Deng's plans of political stability through rapid economic growth required greater flexibility at all levels of the political system. Starting in 1979 from the southern provinces of Guangdong and Fujian, the

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5 Kenneth Walker, *Food Grain Procurement Consumption in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

6 Modern technologies promoted by the central state included farm machinery, fertilizers, plastic sheets for nurturing rice seedlings, improve seeds and pesticides. Lardy, *Agriculture in China's Modern Economic Development*, pp. 136-138.

7 Lardy, *Agriculture in China's Modern Economic Development*, pp. 185-189. Carl Riskin, *China's Political Economy: The Quest for Development Since 1949* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

8 This point is discussed in Chapter Five. See Zhou, *How The Farmers Changed China: Power of the People*, p. 53-55.

9 White, *Riding the Tiger*, p. 29.

central government gradually allowed the decentralization of economic decision-making power from Beijing down to the provinces, from the provinces to the municipalities, and to the county. Accompanying this decentralization was a move away from local self-reliance and national self-sufficiency. For example, the 'grain first' policy that dominated the Mao era was abandoned.[10]

In order to improve peasant initiatives, the state toyed with the idea of decollectivizing agriculture. That it finally endorsed household farming appears to have been initially the result of grassroots activity.[11] In some poorer regions of China, peasant farmers had taken the initiative as early as 1977 even before Deng's rise to power to practice the *baochan daohu* system (contracting output to household). Under this system, the production team or small group,[12] does the production planning and it allocates to a household a piece of land (or a number of small parcels of varying quality) while providing the necessary inputs. The household does the farming and hands over a specified proportion of its output to the team in return for an agreed number of work points.[13] Contracting work to the household (*baogan daohu*), a more radical form of family farming was initially frowned upon by Beijing. However, when production levels rose in Anhui and Sichuan, provincial leaders such as Wan Li and Zhao Ziyang were able to convince the central state to endorse the system to boost the living standard of poorer regions. Soon other, richer areas began to put pressure on the central state to allow all farmers the freedom to participate. By 1982 the central state formally legitimized *baochan daohu* and by the end

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[10] Terry Sicular, "Agricultural Planning and Pricing in the Post-Mao Period." *The China Quarterly* Vol. 116, (December 1988), pp. 671-705.

[11] Zhou, *How The Farmers Changed China: Power of the People*, pp. 53-75.

[12] Siu, *Agents and Victims in South China*, p. 279.

[13] White, *Riding the White Tiger*, p. 100.

of 1983 it claimed that ninety-eight percent of peasant households were engaged in contract household farming. [14]

This new system, sometimes known as the 'household responsibility system'[15] is essentially a return to family farming except that landownership is retained nominally by the collective. Indigenous households are guaranteed the right to use or sublease the land that is parcelled to them.[16] By 1984, contracts for farmland were extended from three to fifteen years and those for newly reclaimed land or mountain tree lots were extended to fifty years. Individual households are also allowed to own the means of agricultural production, such as tools, animals, and machinery. Each is bound by contract to deliver a specific quota of the crop both to the state in the form of agricultural tax and to the village collective in the form of a local levy. After meeting these responsibilities, the family may dispose of any surplus as it wishes, keeping it for self-consumption or selling it on the free market or to the state at above-quota price.[17]

Such an arrangement and the cancellation of the grain first policy led to dramatic production changes. Farmers have become both more specialised and more diversified. In

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[14] The near universal adoption of *baogan daohu* is an interesting development in light of the central state paying lip service to regionalism, favouring the adoption of policies that suit local conditions and not simply applying blanket policies to all regions. See Jonathan Unger, "The decollectivization of the Chinese countryside: a survey of twenty-eight villages." *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 58, No. 4, (1985-86), pp. 585-606.

[15] Fieldwork in fact shows that there has been a great variation in the adoption of responsibility systems throughout China. Some areas have continued to use *baochan daohu* , while other areas have moved to large scale farms under the direction of one or two families. See Lin, *Red Capitalism in South China Growth and Development of the Pearl River Delta.*

[16] Fleming Christiansen, "Private Land in China? Some aspects of the development of socialist landownership in Post-Mao China." *Journal of Communist Studies* Vol. 3, No. 1, (1987), pp. 55-70.

[17] White, *Riding the White Tiger*, pp. 100-101.

coastal China, many focus on cash crop farming, in animal husbandry, forestry or aqua culture. In its attempt to increase peasant incentives to produce key commodities, such as grain, edible oils, livestock, sugar and cotton, the central state had no choice but to offer more favourable terms in pricing and procurement.[18] For example, the overall national grain quota and tax was reduced by 20%.[19] Above-quota price bonuses for grain and oils were increased from 30% to 50%. Preferential prices of agricultural inputs, such as fertilizers and pesticides, were given to producers for above-quota cotton and sugar deliveries to the state. Similarly favourable terms were offered for cash crops such as tobacco. In addition, the state agreed to purchase as much of these essential products as farmers wished to sell.

At first, the peasants reacted favourably to these incentives. Grain deliveries to the state increased even though the area sown in grain declined from 121 million hectares in 1978 to 114 in 1983.[20] However, problems soon started to emerge as farmers discovered ingenious methods to manipulate the system. For example some farmers saved output for a few years and then delivered the harvest all at once to get the bonus for overfulfilment of contracts. Other farmers would reduce their delivery quota by combining the harvests from several households and deliver it to the state under the name of one. The consequence of these manipulations was that quota fulfilment declined, and the state had to obtain its share of key commodities at above-quota prices. The drain on the state budget was substantial. The government had promised that it would buy as much grain as farmers wished to sell and thus ended up storing surplus grain which sometimes rotted in the warehouses. To make matters worse, the state could not recuperate by passing its losses to the consumer. As a socialist state, it has continued to subsidize urbanites through selling them essential

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18 Sicular, "Agricultural Planning and Pricing in the Post-Mao Period." pp. 467-468.

19 Sicular, "Agricultural Planning and Pricing in the Post-Mao Period." p. 468.

20 White, *Riding the White Tiger*, p. 73.

agricultural products at artificially low retail prices. To deal with the problems of excessive and expensive grain, the central state had to make adjustments in the pricing and procurement system in 1985. It abolished the distinction between quota and above-quota prices, and set a proportional price equal to 70% of the old above-quota price plus 30% of the old quota price.[21] No longer requiring peasants to fulfil a mandatory quota, it instead signed a grain contract with each household and allowed peasants to pay cash in lieu of grain.

The decline in the state's role as monopsonist in agricultural products in the early 1980s led to a corresponding increase in the importance of markets.[22] Rural markets and fairs not only reopened but came to be held frequently.[23] A substantial number of peasants abandoned full-time farming and increasingly derived their main income from non-agricultural activities. In order to improve circulation of farm products and other daily items, the central state in its Document #1, 1984[24] , allowed peasants to enter into long distance trading with motorized vehicles, and to operate businesses and services outside their villages. In an attempt to prevent them from rushing illegally into large cities, the state even allowed legal migration into small cities, provided that peasants took care of their grain and housing in these urban places.[25] Some peasants did make use of this new provision and moved out of their villages into county towns. Others simply ignored the

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21 *Ibid.*, p. 73.

22 Sicular, "Agricultural Planning and Pricing in the Post-Mao Period." pp. 470-471.

23 G. William Skinner, "Rural Marketing in China: Repression and Revival." *China Quarterly*, Vol. 100, (1985), pp. 393-413.

24 *China Quarterly* Vol. 101, (March, 1985), pp. 132-142.

25 See Lin, *Red Capitalism in South China,* pp. 131-137 and Yuen-fong Woon "Circulatory mobility in post-Mao China: temporary migrants to Kaiping County Pearl River delta region." *International Migration Review* No. 27, (Fall, 1993), pp. 578-604.

state and worked illegally in large cities.

At the level of the collective, the central state had more success in its economic reforms, particularly, the restructuring of rural industries. During the Mao years these enterprises were only permitted to support local agriculture, producing such farm necessities as fertilizers, tools, and irrigation pumps. Central state polices limited employment in such enterprises to 10 to 15 percent of the labour force. During the Deng years, however, the principle of local self-reliance gave way to market orientation. Instead of catering to local agriculture, rural industries became geared towards consumers' demand for consumer goods, like shoes, toys, watches, electric fans and other items. In parts of the Pearl River Delta where transportation and infrastructure is in place, and where export-processing and foreign investment received a big push by the central state, manufacturing expanded to include production for export as well as for home consumption.[26] Throughout coastal China, collective industries became the "cash registers" for the rural government and the main employers of surplus rural labour. This trend was encouraged by the central state as a way to induce underemployed peasants to 'leave the soil but not the village' (*litu bu lixiang*) and to 'enter the factory without moving to the city' (*jinchang bu jincheng*).[27]

By the mid 1980s, a substantial number of rural cadres had turned collective entrepreneurs managing or overseeing rural industrial enterprises.[28] This was but one example of the larger overhaul of the commune system undertaken by Deng. Starting from 1984, although there are still different levels of governance in each rural community, there is supposed to be a clear division of labour in each level into Party affairs, administrative

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[26] Lin, *Red Capitalism in South China,* p. 140.

[27] Samuel Ho, "Rural Non-Agricultural Development in Post-Reform China: Growth, Development Patterns and Issues." *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 68, No. 3, (1995), pp. 360-391.

[28] Lin, *Red Capitalism in South China,* pp. 140-41.

affairs and economic affairs. As can be seen in Fig. 6., the commune came to be known as the *xiang* (or township government),[29] its administrative structure divided into the township Party Committee, the township people's government, and the township economic commission. Likewise, the production brigade is now known as the *cun* (administrative village). It is divided into a Party committee, a villagers' committee, and a village economic co-operative.[30] The Party committees at both *xiang* and *cun* levels are supposed to focus on controlling party members, mass organizations, and the militia. The *xiang* government administration and the *cun* villagers' committees are both supposed to be concerned with the infrastructure, civil administration, education, health and family planning within their jurisdiction. Finally, the economic management commissions of both the *xiang* and the *cun* levels are supposed to be primarily concerned with the management of the local economy including township-village enterprises and other business activities.[31]

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[29] In some areas of China, such as Guangdong, the word *zhen* is used instead of *xiang* and the former production brigade is termed *guanliqu.* See Graham Johnson, Graham and Yuen-fong Woon, "Rural Development Patterns in Post-Reform China: The Pearl River Delta Region in the 1990s." *Development and Change* Vol. 28, No. 4, (October, 1997), pp. 731-752.

[30] As the household responsibility system transformed peasants into semi-private farmers the organizational level of the production team became redundant and was effectively eliminated. In theory the township government supervises the villager's committee and the township economic commission oversees the village economic co-operative. See Ho, Samuel (1994) *Rural China in Transition Non-agricultural Development in Rural Jiangsu, 1978-1990*, Clarendon Press. At the same time, the township organs report to and are supervised by their county counterparts. The political structural changes did not happen all at once and even in areas where they were implemented early on many villages continued to use the labels "commune" and "brigade" long after the formal change to township administrative village. See Judd, *Gender and Power In Rural North China*, p. 9.

[31] Samuel Ho, *Rural China In Transition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 209-212.

Fig. 7. Deng Xiaoping's Restructured Rural Order

Township (*Xiang*) Government

Xiang Party Committee	Xiang People's Government	Xiang Economic Commission
- Party discipline - Mass organization - People's Militia - Party Branch Committees in Government, Villages and TVEs	- infrastructure - civil administration - health and education - family planning - Village People's Committees	Township-Village Enterprises (TVEs)

Administrative Village (*Cut*)

Village Party Branch	Villagers' Committee	Village Economic Cooperative
- Party discipline - Mass organization - Militia	- infrastructure - civil administration - education - health - family planning	- village enterprises

This new division of labour, spearheaded by the central state in 1984, however, did not always work in practice. In fact, administration and Party remained merged and was still dominated by the latter. Leading positions in *xiang* government, for example, the mayor, first vice mayor, second vice mayor continued to be Party leaders such as Party Secretary, First Vice Secretary and Second Vice Secretary.[32] This overlapping of roles also extends to the economic realm, with Party Secretaries often holding concurrent positions in the economic management commission as well. The same is true at the *cun* level.[33]

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[32] Thomas Heberer, "The Consequences of Economic Development at County, Town and Village-levels in Hebei: *Jinzhou* and *Zongshizhuang*."*Provincial China research, news, and analysis*, No. 3, (March 1997), pp. 3-34.

[33] Judd, *Gender and Power In Rural North China*, p. 78.

Since the mid 1980s, the *cun* is the level where the central state, the local cadres, and the peasants have played out the drama of their triangular relationship. Even with the decentralization of decision-making power, the central state has not been totally "hands off". It has tried to shape rural life through periodic production and reproduction campaigns and directives, although violent class struggle sessions are no longer used as means to enforce compliance.[34] Rather, control over local community has taken the form of allocating or withdrawing special favours or restricting the flow of important commodities.

The local cadres, however, were not powerless. Their legitimacy was based on how well the local economy prospered, how well they provided services to the local community including maintenance of roads, bridges, and storage facilities, the management of collective welfare, and the provisions of market information to the peasants. In addition, rural cadres are able to wield both formal and informal power over the rural populace within their jurisdiction. Formally, they controlled long-term allocation of agricultural land and production decisions and job allocations in rural industries. Informally, they too were in a position to grant or deny peasants their much-needed inputs and fertilizers for agriculture, as well as loans, licenses and permits for a variety of non-agricultural economic activities.[35]

Peasants, for their part, were not totally at the mercy of their local cadres either.

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[34] The birth control campaigns, officially implemented through the 1980s, is an example of the state using the village to intervene into the peasant households. See Delia Davin, "The Single-child Family Policy in the Countryside." Elizabeth Croll, Delia Davin, and Penny Kane, (eds.) *China's One-Child Family Policy* (London: Macmillan Press Limited., 1985), pp. 37-82.

[35] Terry Sicular, "China's agricultural policy during the reform period." Joint Economic Committee Congress of the United States (ed..), *China's Economic Dilemmas in the 1990s The Problems of Reforms, Modernization, and Interdependence* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1993) pp. 340-364.

Under the reforms they have had the power to determine how family labour and resources are apportioned. With diversification and specialization of household production and permission to operate enterprises outside their villages, peasant activities have often gone beyond the territorial jurisdiction of local cadres. As well, the fact that land has been allotted for at least fifteen years means that peasants have come closer to having topsoil ownership, with the local state being the absentee landlord.[36] With the changing ethos of the post-Mao era, peasants have at least been able to threaten to use both formal and informal mechanisms to combat unacceptable behaviour on the part of village cadres. Formal mechanisms have existed for legal action against *cun*-or-*xiang*-level cadres for infringement of community members' rights and entitlements promised by the central government. Informal mechanisms included age-old peasant techniques such as passive resistance, active defiance, open conflict or physical violence.[37]

The complexity of relations between the central state, rural cadres, and peasants in the post-Mao era is evident in the various ways in which the Organic Law of the Villagers' Committees (*cunmin weiyuan hui*) has been implemented. Passed in 1987[38] , this law was intended to provide a framework for reorganizing and rejuvenating political institutions at the *cun* level. Villagers were to elect a three to seven member committee to serve as cadres to be responsible for administrative functions and to communicate villagers' opinions to the township (*xiang*) government. The central state's rationale has been that if local elections were introduced peasants would be more likely to cooperate with their chosen leaders in complying to state directives including such unpopular ones as birth

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[36] Christiansen, "Private Land in China?".

[37] Ann Anagnost, "Socialist Ethics and the Legal System." Wasserstrom, Jeffrey and Perry, Elizabeth (eds.) *Popular Protest and Political Culture in Modern China*, (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 1992) pp. 177-205. Lianjiang Li and Kevin O'Brien, "The Politics of Lodging Complaints in Rural China." *China Quarterly*, No. 143, September, 1995), pp. 756-783.

[38] Villagers' Committees first appeared in the 1982 Constitution, Article 111.

control, tax collection, mobilization of unpaid labour, and below-market grain procurement.[39] Furthermore, corruption among *cun* cadres would be less likely if they were made accountable to the village electorate.

Implementation of this law has been patchy and has depended to a large extent on how village cadres and peasants have perceived their interests and understood their resources in relation to themselves and each other. In south China communities where there is a prosperous collective economy, like Shunde and Dongguan in the heart of the Pearl River Delta, local elections have been successfully conducted. Here both cadres and peasants have had strong motives to comply with the Organic Law to engage in grassroots democracy with free, fair, and contested elections. For cadres, the motive to run for election has come from having rural enterprises to administer and profit from. For peasants the interest lies in ensuring that public funds are administered correctly and not misused or squandered by corrupt cadres. However, in communities such as Kaiping at the fringes of the Delta, that have not been characterized by wealth or a flourishing collective economy, village committees are not elected democratically. They have continued to be designated by *xiang* Party functionaries. The same has been the case with north Chinese communities like Huaili, Shandong which has had no extensive rural industries. There cadres and villagers have not been convinced that the Organic Law is in their best interest. From the point of view of villagers, local leaders even if elected seem to remain state agents complying with demands to exert control and extract more from the households.[40] From the *cun* cadres' perspective, local elections have been considered a threat to their security.[41]

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[39] See Kevin O'Brien, "Implementing Political Reform in China's Villages." *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*. Vol. 32, (1994,) p. 39-40.

[40] Judd, *Gender & Power In Rural North China*, pp. 80-81.

[41] O'Brien, "Implementing Political Reform in China's Villages." pp. 48-59.

On the whole, literature on the implementation of the Organic Law suggests overall that successful practice of grassroots democracy is rare in both north and south China. This should not come as a surprise. Just as in an earlier era of Chinese history, formal leaders, even if properly elected, were often regarded with suspicion as spies or agents of the state. It was informal village leaders that often won the trust of local peasants. Woon's study of the rural community in Kaiping is a good illustration of how village projects in the 1990s are handled not by local cadres but by a number of "village construction committees" led by well-regarded villagers acting as unofficial local leaders.[42]

The failure of the central state even to insist on its model of grassroots democracy is an interesting, though, ironic example of local resistance by the peasants. A more serious example of resistance has been the state's increasing failure to keep peasants focused on grain production needed to feed city workers. Lucrative off-farm employment in both private enterprises and collective industries has not only absorbed surplus labour but also lured away the main farmers. With rising costs of agricultural inputs some peasant households have even give up their land completely for reallocation by the collective. Others have retained their land rights as a precaution against future misfortune but either leave only a few members of the household, such the wife and grandparents, to work the farm, or else employ labourers from poorer regions to do so. Still others have met their grain quota by making cash payments. The loss of interest in field agriculture has been widespread in the Pearl River Delta region but is also reported to be a feature in villages of north China such as Zhangjiachedao where usable farm land is in short supply and of poor quality.[43] Even in Huaili, Shandong, where farming has long been successful, most

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[42] Woon "The Reemergence of the Guan Community of South China in the Post-Mao Era: The Significance of Ideological Factors." *China Information*. Vol. XI, No. 1, (Summer 1996), pp. 22-23.

[43] Judd, *Gender & Power In Rural North China*, p. 70.

peasant households now seem to engage in both farming and domestic sideline production or some type of entrepreneurial commodity production.[44]

The central state has tried to combat food production problems by encouraging agricultural specialists to develop large-scale modern farms in highly productive areas like the Pearl River Delta.[45] It has also imposed restrictions on the trading of essential farm products such as grain and sugar in free markets. These restrictions, however, have only made non-agricultural enterprises appear more attractive. The state's periodic inability to meet its obligations, paying farmers in IOUs instead of cash for above-quota produce for example, has undermined its efforts to increase agricultural production and keep peasants on the land.[46]

Yet another example of peasant resistance to state control has been in regard to the controversial 'one-child' policy. Brought into effect in 1979 this drastic policy was the central state's means of addressing China's serious population problem, a problem it considered damaging to long-term national prosperity. At first, the policy was simply to encourage single-child families, but by 1980 it began to limit each couple strictly to one child and attached an imposing list of rewards and punishments to induce compliance. Enforcement ranged from widespread "education" campaigns to mass sterilization.[47] Local cadres whose bonuses depended on fulfilment of the one-child policy even forced rural women in the advanced stage of pregnancy to undergo abortions, causing widespread

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[44] Judd, *Gender & Power In Rural North China*, pp. 74-75.

[45] Lin, *Red Capitalism In South China*, p. 132.

[46] Sicular, "China's agricultural policy during the reform period." pp. 341-355.

[47] Susan Greenhalgh, "Controlling births and bodies in village China." *American Ethnologist,* 21(1) (1994), pp. 3-30.

negative international attention.[48] The one-child policy was completely at odds with the peasants' economic interests in the post-Mao era. With the advent of the *baogan daohu* system in the 1980s peasant households were individually required to pay taxes, procurements and local levies in grain. Children were therefore needed to work the farms, particularly for families who wanted to deploy able-bodied adult labourers to off-farm activities to generate more household income. In addition, the weakening of the collective welfare system in the villages had created a renewed peasant's concern for old age security. As the Leninist state had failed to destroy the patrilineal peasant family and daughters continued to marry out of their natal villages, having a son to look after one in old age again became a vital issue for most rural families.

The state's extreme measures to control reproduction has been strongly contested by the peasants in a multitude of ways. Covert means included the temporary migration of expectant mothers to give births, the illicit removal of IUDs, the adopting out of first born female babies, and in extreme circumstances, female infanticide.[49] Overt methods include a blatant disregard for the policy and the decision to pay fines rather than being limited to one child.[50] These peasants' tactics have been rather successful. With the return to the family as the basic unit of accounting and the rise in rural household incomes, the economic incentives and disincentives which were to be the key mechanisms of enforcement of the one-child policy, have not been effective.[51] Nor has the state been able to count on the

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[48] Steven Mosher, *Broken Earth, The Rural Chinese*, (New York: The Free Press, 1993).

[49] Jeffrey Wasserstrom, "Resistance to the One-Child Family." *Modern China*, Vol. 10, No. 3, (July 1984), pp. 345-374.

[50] Greenhalgh, "Controlling births and bodies in village China." pp. 3-30.

[51] Unlike their rural counterparts, urban couples are entirely dependent on the central state for employment, living space, and food coupons. Consequently the economic incentives and punishments of the one-child policy have a greater effect on city families. See Erika Platte, "China's Fertility Transition: The One-Child Policy." *Pacific Affairs*, pp. 646-671.

local cadres' help.[52] Often local leaders who themselves are part of the patrilineal system, are sympathetic to peasants wanting more than one child, especially if the first born is a daughter. Even when not sympathetic, they are not in a strong enough position to demand compliance. Unlike during the Maoist era, they no longer have complete control over peasant economic resources or peasant migration.

Short of using force, the one-child policy is hard to sustain in the long run. The major reason is funding. Between 1980 and 1984, the central state funded its work teams to go down to the villages to take records of the fertility history of all peasant women of childbearing age and to pay rewards out of central government coffers to those who would undergo procedures such as sterilization and abortions. However, when the state ran out of money, it shifted this responsibility to local governments which also have had insufficient funds to support the programs of rewards and punishments. As a result, some peasants who voluntarily went through sterilization or abortion sometimes got very little or nothing as a reward.[53]

By 1988 widespread rural resistance and the lack of resources for its enforcement brought about modifications to the one-child policy.[54] Single daughter families were

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[52] Tyrene White, "Birth Planning Between Plan and Market: The Impact of Reform On China's One-Child Policy." Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the United States *China's Economic Dilemmas In The 1990s*, Vol. 1, (April 1991), pp. 252-269.

[53] Judith Banister, "China's Population Changes and the Economy." Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the United States *China's Economic Dilemmas In The 1990s*, Vol. 1, (April 1991), pp. 234-251. Tyrene White, "Birth Planning Between Plan and Market: The Impact of Reform On China's One-Child Policy." Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the United States *China's Economic Dilemmas In The 1990s*, Vol. 1, (April 1991), pp. 252-269.

[54] Susan Greenhalgh, "Shifts in China's Population Policy, 1984-86: Views from the Central, Provincial, and Local Levels." *Population and Development Review*, 12, (1986), pp. 491-515.

permitted from that time to have a second child after an interval of about four years.[55] This permission was soon extended to couples whose first child is handicapped or when a groom moves into the bride's village to start a family.[56] Once the central state legally allowed exceptions to the one-child requirement, local cadres went even a step further. In some areas, they allow rural families not in the "special categories" to have two and sometimes even three children. In exchange, villagers tolerate forced abortions if third or fourth pregnancies occur in families considered 'ideal', i.e. having both a son and a daughter.[57]

The one-child policy represents perhaps the central state's most intrusive policy on the peasantry in the post-Mao era. Even this policy, however, has been compromised because of peasant resistance. This episode leads to a more general question: is the central state less capable of imposing its will compared to the Maoist regime? Vivienne Shue does not think so. She argues that during the Maoist era, the cellular nature of the communes, the production brigades and the production teams meant that all state/peasant contact was mediated through the same set of local cadres. As the grassroots cadres' pay was dependent upon local harvests, they had both the opportunity and the incentive to protect the villagers' interests against the state.[58] Rural reforms ended the cellular nature of local communities and removed the local protective layer that envelops the peasant community.

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[55] There are extreme gender implications that has accompanied the modifications to the one-child policy in Central Document #7. See Delia Davin, "Never mind if its a girl, you can have another try' The Modifications of the One-Child Family Policy and its Implications for Gender Relations in Rural Areas." In Jorgen Delman, Clemens Stubbe Ostergaard, and Flemming Christiansen (eds.) *Remaking Peasant China Problems of Rural Development and Institutions at the start of the 1990s*, (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1990), pp. 81-91.

[56] Tyrene White, "Postrevolutionary Mobilization in China The One-Child Policy Reconsidered." *World Politics*, No. 43, (October 1990), pp. 53-76.

[57] Greenhalgh, "Controlling births and bodies in village China." p. 25.

[58] Shue, *Reach of the State: Sketches of the Chinese Body Politic.*

As the peasant households are now signing individual production contracts with the state, the latter's reach into village life is according to Shue more penetratingly direct than ever.

Jonathan Unger disagrees with Shue's evaluation. He believes that it was during the Mao years, that the power of the central state was all-encompassing and overwhelming leaving local agents with no choice but to comply and a peasant's only recourse was covert action.[59] In contrast, once the collective farming ended under Deng Xiaoping,[60] the powers of both the central and local state were trimmed leaving peasants with greater room to resist unpopular policies. Kate Xiao Zhou's work goes a step further than Unger. She argues that peasants have been very powerful in the Deng Xiaoping era, versus both the central and the local state. According to her, the peasants of China have been in fact the vanguard of change successfully pushing the state from a proactive to a reactive position.[61] In her view the example of agricultural decollectivization shows that although the state had only wanted to cut down the size of the production team and to allow decollectivization in backward parts of China, the peasants all over China quietly divided up the land and instituted the *baogan daohu* system, forcing the central state to legalize their actions. Local leaders either acted as ready accomplices to the change or were bribed into cooperation.[62]

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[59] Jonathan Unger, "State and Peasant in Post-Revolution China." *Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol. , (1989), pp. 114-136.

[60] Unger notes that as with campaigns during the Mao years, once the decision to decollectivize had been made, all villages across China were expected to follow suit even though the central state was paying lipservice to the importance of regional differentiation. See Jonathan Unger, Jonathan "The Decollectivization of the Chinese Countryside: A Survey of Twenty-eight Villages." *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 58, No. 4, (Winter 1985-86), pp. 585-606.

[61] Daniel Kelliher's work takes a similar position although he argues also that when the state wishes to thwart peasant efforts it has the last word. Daniel Kelliher, Daniel *Peasant Power in China: The Era of Rural Reform, 1979-1989*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

[62] Zhou, *How the Farmers Changed China: Power of the People.*

In direct opposition to Zhou, Helen Siu and Ellen Judd both maintain that the power of the central state has been strong during both the Mao and the Deng eras although such power has been projected in different ways. According to them, state power, both formal and informal, has been so strong over the forty years of communist rule that people have come to internalize it, to accept it, and even to reproduce it in their daily lives.[63]

I tend to disagree with all of these positions on the triangular power relationship between the peasants, the local cadres, and the central state during the Deng era. It is so difficult to generalize because the complexities that existed during the early years of Communist rule still remain; interaction between state and peasant society under Deng has not always been conflictual, and indeed has sometimes been advantageous to both. When conflict has existed, central state, local cadres and peasants each had social resources for self-protection. In an era of "economics in command", much has depended on economic clout. A wealthy local community, for example, enables both peasants and local cadres to resist unpopular central state policies, so economic rewards or punishments by the state are limited in the effect. Secondly, with some economic decision-making power given to the rural cadres and others to peasant households the central state has broken up the built in alliance between the local cadre and the peasant households. By the same token, the central state also cannot easily command the loyalty of either the peasants or the local cadres. Each increasingly acts as its own agent, protecting its own interests and nobody else. Sometimes these actors are in cooperation; at other times they are at odds with one another.[64] Nevertheless, compared to the Maoist era, I think peasants prove to be less victimized by the state or the local cadres during the Deng era. Peasant households now have more avenues for official resistance. They can threaten to launch formal complaints

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63 Siu, *Agents and Victims*, p. 11.

64 Jean Oi, *State and Peasant in Contemporary China The Political Economy of Village Government.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 132-49.

both individually and collectively against unfair treatment by local cadres.[65] In addition economic freedoms, the freedom of migration and growing prosperity in the countryside have allowed peasants to passively resist or bypass official controls. Having learnt from the past, peasants are not ready to submit silently to bad policies from the central state or to let abusive local cadres exploit their hard work.

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65 Lijiang Li and Kevin O'Brien, "Villagers and Popular Resistance in Contemporary China." *Modern China*, Vol. 22, No. 1, (January 1996), pp. 28-61.

Chapter Seven - Conclusions

The Chinese peasant's world at the beginning of the 20th century could be analyzed as a 'social space' which included the household, the village/lineage, and the standard marketing community. As a household, the peasant family held economic decision-making power. Peasants had the right to own their means of production, to plan their crops, diversify their sources of income, change occupations, migrate to urban centers, and determine the size of their families. As a member of a village community, the Chinese peasant enjoyed the right to land ownership (subsoil rights) and/or the right to use the land (topsoil rights), the right to use public land and water, and, in the case of a male, the right to be part of a patrilineage. As a member of a standard marketing community, the peasant had the freedom to buy and sell in a free market and run his or her own business. This social space was the source of the peasants' identity and morality. Peasants took their freedoms and space for granted during most of the imperial period because of the laissez faire nature of the state and the under development of transportation and communication. However, peasants could no longer do so after the first decade of the 20th century when the Qing dynasty collapsed and the subsequent regimes embarked on modern-style state building projects, using modern means to project their power.

As my thesis shows, alterations in the fabric of the peasant's social space between 1911 and 1992 have depended largely on the strength of the central state. During the period under review, central state power has ranged from near disintegration to near complete centralized control of the social order. At its weakest, during the warlord period (1911-1927), the central state was effectively challenged by the peasantry with community self-defence in the north and outright political rebellion in the south. Villagers fought to retain what was theirs in the Qing dynasty. In the north, this was subsoil rights, and in the south, it was topsoil rights. At the state's strongest and most active phase during the Great Leap Forward (1957-59), the government intruded deep into rural society and took over the peasants' social space. The household, village/lineage, and the self-regulated standard

marketing community were replaced by a new order, the commune, in which the Party chief reigned supreme. This structure governed all political, economic, and social functions of society. As private plots were abolished and animals and tools were handed over to commune governments, the peasant household could no longer make economic decisions . Lineages were outlawed, and villages and standard marketing communities were taken over by the enlarged commune.

During the periods of the Great Leap (1957-59), the Cultural Revolution decade (1966-76), the state made a vigorous attempt to change the peasants' definitions of morality and identity. The new Maoist morality demanded that individual and family interests be subsumed in to those of the team, the brigade and the commune. The collective should take priority over the household economy, thus ensuring economic equality and loyalty to the Party-state. In spite of its efforts, the central state was only successful in imposing Maoist morality during periods of heightened ideological campaigns when work teams, sent-down youth and outside PLA units were present in the villages to ensure compliance. It was never able to change the peasants' definition of morality or their conception of identity completely. Between the ideological campaigns when the locals were left to themselves, peasants engaged in passive resistance to defend family and community interests against the central state.

Peasant society has been represented by a mixture of formal and informal leaders. Much like the social space of the peasants, the scope for influence of these leaders varied with the strength of the central state. During periods when the central state is at its weakest, as it was in the warlord years, unofficial leaders challenged and disobeyed the national government. When, however, the central state was at its strongest, it replaced the unofficial leaders with its own approved officials. Such can be seen during the Mao years (1949-79) when a strong Leninist state created a well-defined local Party structure and a Party-dominated series of mass associations such as the youth league, the women's league, and the local militia. It abolished lineages, secret societies, organized religion, and any

other form of unofficial local leadership as Party members took over as local cadres.

In my survey of central-local state relationships, there are many examples of local leaders, both formal and informal, who became agents and victims of the central state. During the Nationalist period (1927-1937) some informal local leaders faithfully followed the central state and were well rewarded. Others became victims in their efforts to repel central state dominance. After the Communists came to power and previous informal leaders were replaced by official cadres, local cadres became both agents and victims in quick succession. During phases of heightened central state control, such as during the Great Leap Forward, cadres acted in the interests of the central state and sometimes hung onto power. These same leaders, however, often became victims of the state when the political winds shifted and struggle sessions were conducted against them during rectification campaigns.

However local leaders were sometimes neither victims nor agents, particularly when the central state relaxed its hold on rural society. This may be seen to have been the case during the warlord years (1912-1927), the Japanese invasion (1937-45) and civil war (1945-49) when chaos and intense power struggles prevented the central state from being effective and local military strong men emerged to control rural society. Examples of semi-independent actions on the part of formal leaders can also be found in between the "high tide" of Maoist political campaigns. After each intense campaign, there followed a period of recuperation in which local cadres were able to make decisions instead of blindly bowing to central state policy. More recently, during the post-Mao years when the central state experimented with economic decentralization, local cadres have been emboldened to make decisions that are even contrary to state directives.

How did the varying relationship between the central state and the local state affect the peasant's social space? It is extremely difficult to draw a consistent picture. Throughout the period under survey, there were three types of behavioural patterns

amongst local cadres. First, local leaders may aid and abet the peasants attempts to resist the state; second, local cadres may ignore the welfare of the peasants within their jurisdiction and serve central state interests; and last, they may be completely self-serving to the detriment of both the peasant and the central state. Which pattern of behaviour predominated depended not only on the strength of the central state, but also on how closely the fate of the local leaders was dependent on the good will and the cooperation of the peasants. After surveying the existing literature, I am of the opinion that local leaders were most self-serving during unsettling periods mentioned in the last paragraph: warlord years, Japanese invasion, civil war, and the post-Mao period. These were periods in 20th-century Chinese history when the central state did not provide a regular path of political advancement for the local leaders and when the local leaders had multiple opportunities for economic prosperity and self-aggrandisement.

If local cadres at present are able to make use of the partial withdrawal of the state to pursue their own interests what about the peasants? Have they repaired their social space in the post-Mao era? I do not think so. Certainly, with the culmination of Deng's rural reforms in 1984, peasants in the last decade occupy a larger social space than during the Maoist era but they have not regained the freedom they had taken for granted at the beginning of the 20th century. At the household level, while it is true that each family is now the basic unit of accounting, able to make major decisions concerning farm production, employment and the allocation of labour, peasants cannot totally ignore the central government's policy of family planning. In addition, even though there is household farming, the land allotted to each household is not privately owned and cannot be bought or sold. Furthermore the oppressive household registration system has not been dismantled, to that the right of migration is not complete. Indeed it is still illegal for peasants to reside officially in big cities. During times of economic retrenchment and political crisis those who are caught are forcibly sent back to their home communities.

At the community level, peasants are also no longer in control of their own terrain

in the village or the standard market town. The reach of the central state is still deep despite the changes made to the commune system. Although unofficial leaders have now reemerged in some communities to take charge of civic projects the *xiang* and *cun* governments continue to be run by local cadres. For the most part the so-called separation of economic, Party, and administrative functions at the *xiang* (commune) and *cun* (brigade) levels initiated by Deng in 1984 only exists on paper. Party chiefs still occupy most of the important economic and administrative positions. Mass associations such as the women's league, the youth league and the local militia set up during the Maoist era are intact and dominated by the Party apparatus. Although free markets have been restored and expanded and a private sector has reemerged these have to share social and economic space with, and are often dominated by, collective enterprises run by the local state.

Since 1949 Chinese peasants have been controlled by an intrusive state with Leninist characteristics, and not by the laissez faire Confucian state of the past. This Leninist state may be in partial withdrawal during the post -Mao era, but it has not given up its tendency to dominate or even change society. Its tight organizational structure and its multifaceted system of control are still intact. With the revolution in military and communication technology in late 20th-century China, the central state can project its power in an instance when it chooses. For the moment, however, it allows the peasants a certain degree of social freedom in exchange for national economic prosperity. For their parts, both peasants and local cadres are exploiting this reduction of directiveness of central state policy to carve out more autonomy for themselves. They have been more successful in subverting the central state than during the Maoist era although they are not necessarily doing so in concert with one another.

Throughout my research on the triangular relationship between the central state, the local state and the peasants in 20th century China, I have been trying to discover whether there are contrasting north China and south China patterns, as suggested by other China scholars doing ethnographic and local historical research in different parts of the country at

different periods of time. Unfortunately, the lack of continuity in village studies in anyone single location makes it difficult, if not impossible, to systematically compare peasant-state relationships geographically. This is particularly true of rural research in north China because of the near total absence of relevant literature during the civil war period and the Maoist period. Nevertheless even in those periods for which I had more information on the north and the south (for example during the 1911-1937 period and during the 1979-1992 period) I have not been able to discover any undisputable differences in their peasant-state relations. In fact, there seems to be as much difference amongst villages within the same region, as there are between the north and south part of coastal China in this aspect of 20th-century Chinese history. Such variations within regions however, does not discount the possibility of differences between the north and the south but rather illustrates the need to be circumspect when making generalizations of peasant-state relations.

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