SELECT PAPERS FROM
THE CENTER FOR FAR EASTERN STUDIES

No. 3, 1978-79

Proceedings of the NEH Modern China Project, 1977–78:
Political Leadership and Social Change at the
Local Level in China from
1850 to the Present

Edited by Susan Mann Jones

The University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

Center for Far Eastern Studies
The University of Chicago
Kelly Hall 403
5848 University Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60637
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EDITOR'S NOTE

We beg the reader's indulgence for the idiosyncracies of format, romanization, and style that characterize the papers in this volume. Since all the papers are ultimately destined for publication elsewhere, no effort has been made to standardize style or format. We have aimed at accuracy in reproducing the papers as they originally appeared, with minimal stylistic revision. Glossaries are included for papers by Kuhn, Jones, and Alitto. Readers desiring character lists for the other papers are urged to write the authors directly, in care of The Center for Far Eastern Studies, The University of Chicago.

SMJ
May, 1979
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PREFACE

This proceeding consists of the six papers which report the findings, analysis, and conclusions of the participants of the Research Project on "Political Leadership and Social Change at the Local Level in China from 1850 to the Present" at the University of Chicago. This Research Project is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. It began its operation in January 1977 and will last until December 1979. The core group consists of Philip Kuhn, William Parish, Susan Jones and myself. During the first half of this three year program, four scholars joined us as research associates or research fellows: Professor Guy Alitto of the University of Akron, Professor Marc Blecher of Oberlin College, Mr. David Strand of Columbia University, and Mr. Yung-fa Chen of Stanford University. In addition to our individual or collaborative research and frequent interactions among us, we held a series of seminars in which our works were discussed or in which outside scholars were invited to present their findings and views. In the period between January 1977 to June 1978, during which the papers in this volume were produced, we were benefitted by the visits of G. William Skinner, Gilbert Rozman, Winston Hsieh, John Fincher, James Polachek, Richard Weiner, Benedict Stavis, Dick Madsen, Susan Naquin, and Mitch Meisner. In addition to being a regular participant in our seminar, Keith Schoppa also presented a paper. A selected group of students took part in our discussions. We are grateful to Professors John K. Fairbank, G. William Skinner, Dwight Perkins, Peter Schran and John Lewis for their willingness to serve on our National Advisory Board. We also wish to acknowledge the help and encouragement of Dean William Kruskal, Pro-
essor Chauncy Harris, Professor Tetsuo Najita, Professor Susanne Rudolph and Professor Akira Iriye, in their various capacities. Finally, we want to express our gratitude to Dr. Margaret Child and Mr. Jeffrey Field of the N.E.H. for their guidance in matters of finding and administering the grant.

Tang Tsou  
Principal Investigator  
Research Project on  
"Political Leadership and Social Change at the Local Level in China from 1850 to the Present"
INTRODUCTION

by Philip A. Kuhn and Susan Mann Jones

Polarities such as "state and society," long used by Western writers to describe the fundamental axes of Chinese public life, stemmed from efforts to characterize a political system that seemed curiously deficient in Western eyes. By comparison with Western Europe, what seemed to be missing were social groups with powers and immunities derived from a late feudal background, whose long-standing tensions with royal power had generated the institutions of the national states that emerged during the early modern age. Where were the landed aristocracy, whose struggle with monarchic absolutism had led to the distinctive power balance of the English constitution? Where the urban-dwelling merchants and bankers whose feudal immunities and financial services had grown over into a distinctive set of national institutions in the modern period? The difficulty, in the Chinese case, of perceiving such intermediate strata led Marx to his conception of "the Asiatic mode of production," and Weber to his patrimonial-prebendal characterization of the Chinese state.

Marx's perception of a myriad of self-contained villages, totally dominated by a state despotism which both exploited them economically and controlled them militarily, left no room for social evolution save one imposed from without. These "idyllic village communities, inoffensive though they may appear, had always been the solid foundation of Oriental despotism. . . ."1 The supposed absence of true private property--agricultural as well as commercial/industrial--obviated the development of social classes like these in the West and left the state as a kind of free-floating power holder, linked to society at large by no organic ties of interest or obligation.

Max Weber's view of China lacks the abstract formalism of Marx's. Yet, even though he was aware of the emergence of the "literati" as a fundamental element of Chinese social structure, the dominant role of state
power remained the central theme of his work. The literati, far from being an organic outgrowth of society, were selected and sustained by state institutions. "For twelve centuries social rank in China has been determined more by qualification for office than by wealth."² It was the examination system that defined the elite, and the examination system was itself linked to what Weber calls the prebendal form of Chinese local administration. A "prebend" being a jurisdiction conferred upon an official as an object of economic exploitation, it followed that the flourishing of commerce could only strengthen, not weaken, the power of the literati agents of state power, since it provided only opportunities for further extraction by them. However developed the forms of local industry and commerce, they could never give rise to a class with an independent realm of powers and immunities. Landlordism, which might have become the basis of a local aristocracy, was "strongly curbed" by the powers of local lineages ("sibs"), which supposedly inhibited the alienation of land by small private cultivators; and by the state's inability to enforce the collection of rent on behalf of landlords. An extreme fragmentation of holdings therefore characterized Chinese agriculture. "The equalitarian levelling tendency corresponded to patrimonial bureaucracy."³ Here was a more subtle and flexible formulation than "Oriental despotism," but one which still left state and society analytically polarized.

It is no mere coincidence, surely, that these social-scientific reflections by outsiders correspond, in their formal structure, to the traditional way in which Chinese viewed their own society. The polarity between rulers and ruled in early Chinese political theory blended easily into a state-society dualism, as the power and status of the literate elite became guaranteed by service to monarchy. The traditional four-part occupational status model (scholars/agriculturists/artisans/merchants), far from developing into a theory of "estates," was completely overshadowed by the political distinction between commoners and titled literati—the titles being fundamentally indicia of eligibility for state service.
In the West, more refined social-historical treat-ments of Chinese politics gave rise to new formulations in which "state" and "society" seemed increasingly unsatisfactory as analytic polarities. The most influential among such approaches is exemplified by the work of Wolfram Eberhard, in which "gentry society" was conceived to be the social form that succeeded the breakdown of ancient Chinese feudalism. Eberhard's _Conquerors and Rulers_ ascribed what amounts to a brokerage role to the literati. Standing between state and society, they possessed a dual identity as state servants and as local magnates. This intermediate role was made possible by family connections that spanned the gulf between the administrative urban centers and the countryside. Eberhard did not carry his analysis past the medieval period, but the work of Franz Michael and Chang Chung-li, among others, distinguished the same theme in late imperial society.

The elegance of the "gentry society" analysis lies in its inbuilt historical dynamic: its linkage of social structure to the waxing and waning of centralized monarchic power. The alternation of stages in the gentry's relationship to the state stemmed from its dual or intermediate role: adhesion to the central authorities in times of dynastic strength, withdrawal into local society in times of dynastic decline. Here was a centralism-regionalism rhythm that meshed well with the traditional Chinese theme of dynastic cycles. It also seemed to explain the persistence of the literati-elite as a ruling group through repeated turns of dynastic fortune.

**Differentiation within the elite.** For all its strengths, "gentry society" will require considerable refinement before it can serve as a satisfactory model for late imperial social structure. How the "gentry" emerged from the specific historical conditions of Ming-Ch'ing times is still under study. The stratification of the elite (particularly the relationships between its state-connected upper strata and its county-based lower ones) is still poorly understood. In what sense can the local literati of the _sheng-yuan/chien-vii_
sheng stratum be regarded as a group serving as intermediary between state and society; or, by contrast, as a local leadership group that dominated small-scale communities and actually competed with the state in fiscal and judicial affairs? The role of local elite as managerial personnel in an increasingly commercialized society raises questions about the real nature of their "brokerage" activities on the local level. To what degree can the professional waterways managers of Ch'ing Kiangnan, as described by Mark Elvin, be considered de facto functionaries of the state system, and to what degree are they part of a growing realm of commercial-managerial activity that was slowly giving the gentry-elite new roles in an increasingly powerful local polity?

The big question here for students of China's modern history is whether there are indications, in Ch'ing times, of an indigenous trend towards a deepening infrastructure of state management on the local level. How we answer this question will depend on how we interpret the increased activism of local elites in late Ch'ing times. If such activism, discussed in Kuhn's article in this volume, signifies a new assertion of autonomy and initiative by the intermediate stratum known as gentry, then perhaps these people were already transcending their "brokerage" functions between state and society, and emerging as a kind of middle class by the early twentieth century. If on the other hand this intermediate group remained closely tied to the state system, whether through formal mechanisms of official service or through patron-client ties to regular bureaucrats, then we can view "local self-government" as but a stage in the development of a more penetrating system of state control. In either case, the "brokerage" notion suffers, because local elite activists are no longer seen to be "functioning" in a stable system of balanced power and historical repetitiveness.

Systematic variation in local leadership structures. In his recent work on "physiographic macro-regions," G. William Skinner has given us a comprehen-
sive framework by which the "gentry society" idea can be integrated with more precise descriptions of economic structure. The Skinner model enables us to distinguish modes of state-society interaction which differ along a gradient of commerce and control that runs from the "core" of a macroregion to its "periphery." In an effort to escape the unsatisfactorily abstract description of societal types in terms of an infinitude of points along a graph-line, a series of four ideal-typical modes have been identified. Near-est the core, the most highly urbanized region, the local elite are closely bound to the state, with much fiscal and "public service" activity farmed out to them; this delegation of authority depends on the rich pool of local literati talent in such wealthy, densely populated regions; and also on the close connections between the local elite and the urban-based bureaucracy. Farthest from the core, the state sought the closest supervision of local government, as suggested by the narrow "span of control" within the local bureaucracy. In these "peripheral" jurisdictions, where security was a more pressing matter than revenue, the central government instituted a more direct and coercive penetration of local power structures.

However many "zones" will finally be viewed as the most appropriate typology for the core-periphery model, Keith Schoppa's forthcoming study of Chekiang demonstrates how the social characteristics of places in various zones determined the nature of political development in the twentieth century. It will no longer be possible to speak of political change in modern China without first paying close attention to the way particular local areas fit into the range of variation within large economic systems. The search for ways of relating state and society within new kinds of political systems must have been influenced, in every locality, by the characteristics of local politics that grew out of late imperial times.

* * *

Physiographic models of the Skinner and Schoppa
type are based upon regional systems analysis, which discerns systematic relationships between spatial and social structures. But Skinner's model also adds a temporal dimension. At its broadest level, the model posits a fundamental change in the relationship between state and society, beginning in T'ang times and resulting from a growing disparity, or incongruity, between the government-imposed network of political/administrative centers and the hierarchy of commercial central places proliferating alongside, beneath, and (in certain areas) independently of, this official administrative system. Because the network of government administration did not expand to ensure a constant ratio of officials to population, or of administrative extractive centers to local surpluses, Skinner argues that over time a measure of authority passed inexorably and increasingly into the hands of local non-bureaucratic powerholders. A similar view is developed, using a spatial model, in Gilbert Rozman's recent analyses of central places and premodern periodization in China. Regional systems analysis has thus added an important new dimension to our understanding of the rise of gentry society after the T'ang. It is the changing relationship of local elites to the central government during the nineteenth century that concerns us here, however, and to that set of problems we now turn.

Centralization and decentralization in modern Chinese history. The well-known delegation of important fiscal as well as military authority to local leaders in the course of the nineteenth century was possible because both local/unofficial and central/bureaucratic leaders shared a common ideological commitment to a hierarchical order of rulers and ruled. When, during the late nineteenth century, some members of the educated elite began to change their ideological commitments, the mutual accommodation between bureaucratic and local authority systems was unbalanced. Principles of paternalism and hierarchy were first reinterpreted by monarchists, then reconstructed by republicans, and ultimately rejected by communists. The normative consensus that had enabled
the bureaucratic apparatus to flexibly accommodate local conditions by giving authority to local elites broke down. It broke with the rise of disorder in the countryside beginning in the late eighteenth century. It further deteriorated with the introduction of Western ideas—not only social Darwinism but also Western-style education in commerce, law, technology, and science. It foundered fatally on the termination of the examination system in 1905. And it wholly collapsed with the promulgation of a constitution, the creation of elected assemblies, and the overthrow of the imperial order. No longer was it possible for a central bureaucratic apparatus to rely on local powerholders to uphold and represent its authority.

Thus the long-term secular rise in the authority of local elites in core areas described by Skinner did not represent a threat to the social order of rulers and ruled as long as there was a shared consensus, among bureaucrats and non-bureaucrats alike, concerning imperial ritual authority, the Confucian classical educational system, and the civil service examinations. However, as the political power of local elites increased, their sense of the very legitimacy of bureaucratic institutions was damaged. The legitimacy of bureaucratic institutions was threatened in two ways. First, as their power grew, local elites increasingly sought to appropriate the functions formerly reserved to bureaucratic officeholders; while at the same time, bureaucratic officeholders found themselves incapable of performing their duties satisfactorily.

The late Ming crises in bureaucratic control systems like li-chia and pao-chia, discussed in Kuhn's paper, are one indicator of this threat. The pleas of local elites for more authority, to be delegated as "feudal" privileges that were to be non-bureaucratic and legitimized locally, are indicators of a different sort. During the late Ming period, and increasingly through the Ch'ing, we hear critics of central bureaucratic institutions charging that the rigidity of the highly centralized administrative apparatus was an obstacle to the implementation of its very own goals. The goals set by the central
government could only be achieved, argued these critics, by consigning them to the charge of local elites who knew local conditions, who could provide the natural leadership necessary to their support and implementation, and who could cut through the red tape and peculation that beset the existing bureaucratic apparatus.

The concern for local autonomy represented in "feudal"-spirited critiques was captured in the programs for local self-government (tì-fang tzu-chih) during the late Ch'ing reforms and under the Republic. Indeed, as Guy Alitto has shown elsewhere, the work of rural reconstructionists and revolutionary organizers alike reflected a concern for local self-sufficiency and an anti-bureaucratic populism that was sympathetic to certain aspects of the "feudal" spirit. Yet the vision of the larger social order that framed the context of local autonomy changed dramatically during the twentieth century. The feudal critics of late imperial times, granted local power, upheld the authority of the existing order of rulers and ruled. Communist revolutionaries of the Republican era aimed at its destruction.

Feudal and socialist visions of local autonomy. In Mao's vision, the 1949 Revolution was a revolution bent on achieving equality and eliminating all the differences of the old order—not only differences between classes, but between regions, and between city and countryside. Yet the very commitment to equality implied as well the reconstitution of a highly centralized and powerful government authority, precisely to guarantee the extraction and redistribution of surpluses that would make equality possible. That is, an ideological commitment to a new order of equality required the government to implement uniform administrative procedures that would both ensure its own capacity to transfer wealth from one sector of society to the other, and provide the context for inculcating and enforcing the commitment to equality on the part of local constituencies. Here equality joined nationalism (in the rhetoric of revolutionary leaders) as the rationale for creating a strong central
government. And here we meet the central issue posed by the Chinese revolution of the twentieth century: the recasting of local authority structures for the creation of a new local constituency. This new local constituency, like the old imperial elite, had to be imbued with a spontaneous spirit of support for the central government's goals, so that it could be entrusted with the task of carrying out those goals independently and in accordance with local conditions.

The Nanking government under the Kuomintang appears never to have directly confronted the ideological incompatibility between late Ch'ing-style reform measures (combining "feudal" and "local self-government" policies) and the requirements of its own programs for creating a strong centralized national government. The best effort to explain the Nationalist government's policies has been Lloyd Eastman's account of the Nanking decade (1927-37), which argues that the Kuomintang government was, in effect, its own constituency—on a "collision course" with local landholding elites and bourgeois townsmen in its efforts to nationalize and control a high percentage of the surplus, yet unable to construct a local following from which it could claim sanction or support. That is, while the Nanking decade has ironically been portrayed as the period of China's disintegration, it was in fact a period of intensive construction of a centralized administration, but one that was perforce built like Topsy, without a mass constituency. There were neither ideological, coercive, nor material incentives to persuade local constituencies of the need to support the programs of the central government. The maintenance of order still seemed best served by temporarily allowing power to rest with existing local authorities, formal and informal.

The continuing necessity of delegating authority to local decision-making units was recognized by the Chinese Communist Party in its earliest organizational efforts. But CCP policy embodied both a redefinition of state and local interests, and a reconstruction of the means for controlling and tapping local political and economic systems. These depended
in turn upon a redefinition of order itself that envisioned, and provided the organization for, the creation of a new constituency at the local level. This constituency was to have a nationalist orientation (provided by education and political study) that would serve as a rationale for the increased intervention of the state in local affairs. At the same time, the new constituency was to participate in national society through local production units within which the right to egalitarian participation was defined and protected by the state.

This redefinition of order is, at its most abstract level, a normative construction, and its effects on state policy have been the substance of what we call revolution. Only by first reconstituting the structure of local authority, thereby altering the relationship between local society and the state, could the government pursue policies that accommodated local variation without compromising central authority. And as Parish and Whyte's recently published study has shown, the new constituency built in the countryside by land reform is again creating the conditions for protecting and preserving its autonomy from central bureaucratic control.12 In the process, local leaders are again heard suggesting that an overly centralized and rigid bureaucratic administration will become an obstacle to the achievement of its very own most important goals: high productivity, rapid economic growth, and a strong nation-state.

Writing the history of revolution. One way to make sense out of the last hundred years of China's history is thus to discuss the relationship between the central government bureaucracy (the state) and local administrative systems (society). We seize all the more gratefully upon these broad conceptual problems to order our understanding because, as Guy Alitto so aptly remarks of Republican historiography, the period from 1911 to 1949 has been conceptualized largely as a period lacking coherence or historical continuity. It is described as an interregnum, like any "period of disunity" in Chinese history; a period in
which the historian's burden becomes the tracing of an elusive thread of legitimate authority passing from hand to (usurper's) hand. So it was that a generation of American graduate students studied a "warlord" period by memorizing the sequential accession of various cliques to power in Peking—or, after 1927, the contest for power between leaders of the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party.

The study of local history, exemplified in the papers in this volume, has benefitted American scholars in part by relieving that burden. By introducing historians to the ethnographer's sense of the complexity and variation in local society, local history has sufficiently complicated the scenario of twentieth-century politics that the telling of a coherent national story, the tracing of a single plot line (borrowing a metaphor from Harry Harootunian), has been shown to be only one of a number of legitimate options in reconstructing modern China's past. Flux and disorder are, in fact, amenable to historical description. We may yet benefit from our efforts to understand and describe a historical process that is discontinuous and incoherent.

It is thus no accident that half of the six papers in this volume address the problem of disorder in both city and countryside during the Republican period. Even those three papers that discuss civilian life and civil administration underscore the changing composition of local leadership during the first half of the twentieth century, and its relative autonomy from direct control by the central administration. Although these papers are case studies that can only be suggestive of new approaches to the study of the 1911-1949 period, they do offer important insights into three problems of general interest to social scientists: the problem of consciousness in social movements, the problem of defining legitimate authority at the local level, and the problem of conceptualizing the scope or scale of what we call "local" (in Chinese, ti-fang) politics.

Identifying the source of revolutionary consciousness has been a problem in Marxist-Leninist theory, and posed particular difficulties for Mao in
his effort to forge a disciplined and united party that included both peasant activists and urban intellectuals. The conviction of many Marxists that only an urban proletariat could achieve true revolutionary consciousness is supported by Strand and Weiner's analysis of urban social movements in Peking. Unlike the secret societies in Ch'en Yung-fa's paper, or the local bandit networks discussed by Guy Alitto, ricksha pullers moved through a distinctively different kind of physical space. Removed from ties to family and locale, they confronted an authority structure represented by policemen, who in turn enforced the interests of a largely business community. Denied the shelter of paternalistic organizations like the rural secret society, the ricksha pullers constitute a more receptive audience for a revolutionary vanguard than do their rural counterparts. Life in the city had familiarized them with the language, if not the import, of current political struggles, and they were aware, above all, of the pervasive disorder and uncertainty of daily life in the absence of a stable national government.

Cities, then, were a new "arena" for politics, as Strand and Weiner put it, an arena which had to be constructed in the countryside by first destroying an old authority structure. Tsou, Blecher, and Meisner show one result of a reconstituted social order in their study of Ta-chai (Dazhai) and other brigades in Hsiyang (Xiyang) County; but clearly this order is a product of a process of directed, revolutionary social and economic change, stemming locally from land reform and collectivization, that was put in train after 1949. There was no free-floating constituency in the countryside analogous to the Peking ricksha pullers; constituencies supporting revolution had to be formed after the breakdown of the paternalistic networks in which all rural residents participated.13

To attempt to locate the source of revolutionary consciousness is to assume a certain consensus about legitimate authority on the part of a class or group--in this case, the poor and lower-middle peasants or workers. It was Mao Tse-tung and other leaders
within the CCP, however, who articulated and defined the criteria for legitimacy, in behalf of the masses. These criteria cited two goals: nationalism (the creation of a strong central government and a planned growth economy) and equality (the guarantee of equal access to both political decision-making and economic rewards). Neither a commitment to nationalism nor a commitment to equality can be located in the actions of the social movements and local constituencies described in the papers on rural Republican politics by Kuhn, Ch'en, and Alitto. Their leaders located the basis for their authority in other sources: military strength or armed force, control over existing local organizations, wealth, and participation in the discourse of moderate reformism (local self-government programs). The same can be said of Jones's description of the commercial elite in county seats and market towns, underscoring the importance of distinguishing levels of urbanism in citing urban-rural differences.

Redefining the criteria for legitimation of authority was a major success of the Chinese Communist movement. As Tsou, Blecher, and Meisner suggest in their discussion of Ta-chai (Dazhai), however, a successfully reconstituted order of authority at the local level developed its own sets of goals and priorities. The socialist road, and particularly the commitment to equality, necessarily consigned a degree of autonomy to local-level units, which in turn often pursued their own interests at the expense of their less well-favored counterparts.

The historical resiliency of local-level constituencies is remarked by both Kuhn and Jones in their discussions of the staying power of local landed and commercial elites, and in Ch'en Yung-fa's study of secret society and bandit networks. To be sure, the composition of the leadership group has changed and the base of this leadership has now been broadened because post-1949 leaders have been recruited from a larger social class that specifically excludes members of the old elite. Yet the extension of central bureaucratic control over lower-level units, and the resistance to policies urging the aggregation of...
units of local administration above the village level, continue to pose fundamental political problems in China. The county and the village (whether a team or a brigade) still appear to define the major units of local administration. How county-level authorities interact with village-level leaders and with their superiors in the central administration promises to continue to occupy our attention.

Why should administrative levels and the span of control in bureaucratic administration be such a fascinating research topic? Partly because we believe that the way China's leaders solve these problems will tell us important things about prospects for individual freedom and collective decision-making in a socialist society and a developing economy. Can a strong nation also, in the long run, ensure the equality of its people? If (as Yen Fu and Mao Tsetung believed) nationalist goals can only be achieved by mobilizing the fullest creative energies of each individual, will a commitment to egalitarianism sustain that mobilization? We study China in the not disinterested hope of finding answers.

NOTES


3. Ibid., pp. 82-83.


9. This important subject is explored in the ongoing research of Professor James Polachek of Princeton University, and was discussed in his seminar presentation on litigation procedures in the fall of 1977.


THE WARTIME COMMUNISTS AND THEIR LOCAL RIVALS: BANDITS AND SECRET SOCIETIES

by Ch'en Yung-fa

Introduction. This essay is part of a much larger study of the Chinese Communist Party's (hereafter CCP) rise to power in Central China during the period of anti-Japanese resistance. In other parts, I approach the problem in a context of three bipolar struggles: between the CCP and the Kuomintang (hereafter KMT), between the KMT and the Japanese, and between the Japanese and the CCP. In this essay, I move away from the CCP's two central power rivals and focus instead on its two organizational contenders on the local scene, bandits and secret societies.*

Among non-Communist parochial organizational interests, bandits and secret societies stood out for their alleged role of opposition to the status quo. These two local powers and the other as well asserted themselves where there was a void of strong central power. In such areas bandits proliferated and, to counter their threat, there was a simultaneous growth of secret societies and elite-led military forces. When routed KMT forces degenerated into a public menace, the imminent Japanese occupation created mass fear. Under these circumstances occurred a frenzied effort by each rural community to save itself from catastrophe.¹

As correctly pointed out by Professor Kataoka Tetsuya, this "spontaneous mobilization" was basically non-political. But as it was primarily tied to the uncertainty about the future under Japanese rule, only the Chinese, whether KMT, CCP or others, could exploit

*Without Professor Elizabeth Perry's and Professor Philip Kuhn's encouragement and editorial help, this essay will never take its current form. I am also indebted to Professors Tsou Tang, Susan Jones, Guy Alitto, Susan Naquin, Mr. David Strand and Mrs. Vallerie Steenson for their comments and help.
it. However, in central China the Communists in general failed to seize the opportunity to form their own local military power and thus preempt spontaneous mobilization as they were able to do in many parts of North China. Nor did the KMT grasp this golden opportunity for wartime mobilization.

Because of their failure to preempt spontaneous mobilization, the KMT, CCP and Japanese all encountered obstruction and opposition from local powers in their efforts to impose law and order. In this essay I will examine the manner in which local powers related themselves to the three contending central powers, but for the sake of convenience, I confine my efforts to studying bandits and secret societies. Of course, my primary concern will be how the CCP perceived the two local powers and how it dealt with them. The KMT and Japanese policies towards them will also help clarify the context. In order to understand the CCP policies better, I will devote particular attention to clarifying the obscure nature of the two local powers during the early Republican period, particularly the CCP's relation with them.

The phenomenon of banditry. The KMT, CCP and Japanese differed markedly in applying the label of "bandits" to the local powers with whom they dealt. Each side tried to stretch the term to include their opponents, while exonerating their own followers. The difficulties arising from political prejudice, however, should not deter us from analyzing bandits as a distinctive type of local power, one which a central power could not ignore in its attempt to develop an alternative local system.

Banditry can be variously a strategy of survival, a shortcut for social mobility and an expression of social protest. No matter what may be the cause in a particular case, banditry can only thrive in the absence of a strong central power. Throughout Chinese history, it was endemic in the inaccessible mountains and swamp lands and along the border area between different administrative units. The warlord era, however, saw the metamorphosis of an endemic into an epidemic. In the early Nanking decade, the contagion infected
almost every province. In central China, almost every rural community in northern Kiangsu, northern Anhwei, the Chekiang-Kiangsu-Anhwei border and the Hupei-Anhwei-Honan border was affected directly.\(^3\)

The resources available for plundering were limited. As groups of bandits multiplied, in time even those with "social bandit" intentions had to ignore their avowed principle of "plundering the rich and helping the poor" (chieh-fu chi-ch'iung).\(^4\) The indiscrimination is suggested by a Communist report about banditry in An-lo hsiang, Huai-nan, in 1943. Fourteen peasants attended an investigation meeting, in which half of them reported having suffered robbery, kidnapping and torture. From the description of the looted items, we can see that the victims of the bandits were by no means confined to what we understand as rich people. Actually, only two of the fourteen were classified as rich peasants by the Communist reporters. The rest were either middle or poor peasants. Seven persons who were lucky enough to escape the robbery had no complaints against the bandits only because they were all hired peasants living in extreme poverty.\(^5\)

In Shu-yang, Kiangsu, during the early Nanking Decade, rampant banditry forced the peasant to carry his rifle while working. During the harvest, the peasants of Hsiao-hsien, Kiangsu, also had to have armed protection. It seems that the description fit many other parts of northern Kiangsu, northern Anhwei and northern Hupei as well. The robbery of draft animals in particular had serious implications for agricultural production.\(^6\) The Communists found banditry a major reason for the lack of productive enthusiasm among the peasants in An-lo, Lai-an.\(^7\) The peasants of Ch'en-wei, a typical hsiang of Huai-pei, also decided against re-investment of their money in draft animals for the same reason.\(^8\)

During the warlord era, countless groups of bandits arose; their size varied from a couple of people to several thousand. Each band acted independently. In the face of encirclement by the government army, bandits might help each other, but no bandit head appeared to have the capacity to amalgamate the vari-
ous groups into a larger unit. One explanation seems to lie in the government's practice of co-opting into its army bandit chiefs, particularly those of large bands. This gave many ambitious banditry leaders a chance to become part of the Republican elite. Marshals Chang Tso-lin and Lu Jung-t'ing were but two of the most famous. While the failure to reorganize and retrain the surrendered bandits led to a general debasement of the government's troops, the widespread use of this practice tended to legitimize banditry as a means of upward mobility, thereby encouraging more bandits to appear.

Some bandits fought against repression and injustice, but one must remember that during the Republican era, none of these "social bandits" ever offered a positive program. Sun Mei-yao, the kidnapper of foreign passengers from a train in Lin-ch'eng, was famous for his righteous preaching, but in the meantime, he tried to negotiate a deal with the warlord government: in return for his release of the foreign captives, the government would appoint him the commander of a brigade and give him total power to reorganize his bandit followers into the regular army. After the deal was made, Sun Mei-yao, however, showed no intention of disciplining his followers. For this reason, local people assassinated him later.

Banditry is risky. Few bandits can expect to continue their looting forever. To become an army officer was a dream only of leaders of large bands. In the above mentioned case of An-lo, we encounter a peasant who retired from banditry. In Chu-huchen, a rural market town, Huai-pei, and Chang-tunhsiang, Huai-pei, we also encounter some self-rehabilitated bandits. No information is available about their ordinary lives. But according to Li Jen-chih, a CCP central committee member now, we know that many bandits acquired land and themselves became landlords in Ssu-Ling-Sui, Huai-pei. Li was struck by the conservatism of these nouveaux riches in the early 1940's. These former bandits, he observed, were so obsessed with their landholding that they were always the first local people to compromise any political principle. In other words, they were mostly political opportunists without the least scruples.
The ability of many bandits to return to the prevailing social order can be attributed to their restrained conduct in their home communities. (The bandits' motto for behavior was a saying: "A hare does not eat the grass near its nest.") But when the grass belonged to strange communities, the bandits would seldom spare whatever they could lay their hands upon. In his idealized description of social banditry, Professor Eric Hobsbawn focuses on the bandits' ties with their home community, but gives little thought to their activities outside it. Within the home community, self-restraint facilitated the reintegration of bandits to normal life. When banditry was pursued as a way of survival and a form of social protest, the process might be easier. Seldom, however, could one erase the stigma associated with the bandit role.

Banditry sometimes became a community-wide phenomenon. During the warlord era, we find villages where the whole population took part in banditry. But outside of Shantung, this phenomenon was rare. To avoid implicating one's own home community, thereby sparing it from possible reprisal by counter-forces, bandits mostly operated outside. In their home community, they were at best tolerated if the two cases of Chu-hu and Chang-tun are typical. When the government applied pressure, the disassociation of community members from them, the feeling of guilt and the prospect of amnesty forced many bandits to make confessions or perform self-criticism in public.

Through banditry, some might manage to improve their livelihood. But in the very process, they might be subjected to the exploitation of the agents who acquired the weapons they could not themselves produce and who disposed of the booty for which they had no direct use. Larger bands could set up front businesses in big cities to handle their needs. The smaller bands, however, had to make do with whomever they could find. In most cases, the willing collaborators appear to have been "rotten gentry and local bullies," who sought profit without risk. In the case of An-lo, a landlord Ho Liang-p'u acted like a trustee for the fortune a bandit head had stored in his house. This bandit head, a former hired peasant under Ho, became an officer after accepting an official deal for surrender. Ho Liang-p'u later pocketed the money when the official made an
about-face and executed the bandit head. We also find landlords lending rifles to their tenants for looting, presumably sharing the profit on a 50-50 basis. In extreme cases, as in T'ai Lake, the landlords even provided leadership to their tenants in their plundering expeditions during the slack season. Unfortunately, we do not know how they distributed their loot.

**Bandits in wartime.** The assertion of a central power, the KMT, during the Nanking period saw a drastic decrease of banditry activities. In spite of their efforts against the Communists, the KMT authorities appeared to be able to give attention to the problem and stem its development. In no sense did they totally wipe out the rampant banditry in northern Kiangsu, northern Anhwei, the Hupei-Anhwei-Honan border and the Chekiang-Anhwei-Kiangsu border; but the situation was visibly improved. The achievement was primarily military and bureaucratic. So when the war caused the KMT military forces and local governments to flee, banditry again arose in their absence.

About 25 miles northwest of Shanghai, T'ai-ts'ang enjoyed peace even in the warlord era. When the war erupted in Shanghai and reached T'ai-ts'ang in late 1937, the magistrate fled. For three months, from December 1937 to March 1938, no bandits appeared. Japanese investigators attributed this lull to the fact that the bandits were waiting for clarification of the war situation. Once certain about the protracted nature of the resistance war, bandits began to form their forces, using weapons they had collected from the nearby battlefield. With a market town or village as their base, they posed as representatives of the resistance cause. In the name of the KMT government, they taxed land and draft animals. Meanwhile, they looted travelling merchants. Some even engaged in kidnapping.

These bandit leaders came mostly from the lower strata of the society. Han Hui-t'ung and Li San-pao, for example, had been bandits before. Li San-pao took advantage of the war-induced chaos to break out of jail. Tai Fu-sheng was a loafer. Keng Ch'ao and Wang Shih-lan were both boatmen from North Kiangsu. Yin Yi-ju's origin was unclear. Tan Pai-ling was the only leader
with formal education from the Whampoa Military Academy, but he was busy fighting with Yin Yi-ju. According to the Japanese materials, only Li San-pao and Wang Shih-lan of these bandit leaders showed strong anti-Japanese commitment. The Japanese met no difficulty in winning the surrender of both Keng Ch'ao and Tai Fu-sheng. These two bandit leaders and their followers, however, survived intact as units of the puppet forces.\(^{20}\)

In citing the T'ai-ts'ang case, doubtless we should be suspicious about the Japanese use of the term "bandit." The usage of the term, nevertheless, serves to remind us of the appearance of politicized bandits, by which we mean those who tried to use the legitimacy of a central power to cover up their predatory behavior. The Chinese materials, despite their disagreement about the application of the term "bandit," confirmed the emergence of many such people. The major concerns of these people were economic gain and physical survival. It was in the Japanese interest to label any anti-Japanese elements as bandits, but in the T'ai-ts'ang case, we can be sure of the absence of nationalistic motivation on the part of Keng Ch'ao and Tai Fu-sheng. This case also suggests that the KMT as a legitimate power survived the Nanking debacle for quite a long period. When the Japanese began to impose their puppet government, however, this hold loosened. Quite a number of bandits changed their political color and tried to survive in the form of puppet forces.

The politicized bandits resembled the bandit-turned-warlord troops insofar as the central power lacked the ability to absorb them. The old problem of "indistinction between soldiers and bandits" (ping-fei pu-fen) came back to haunt both the Japanese and the KMT. These politicized bandits followed orders only when the directives were not detrimental to their narrow interests. We do find some cases in which the KMT or the Japanese succeeded in fully politicizing the bandits, but we more often find the opposite case.

In addition to the absence of strong central authority, the war, the disbanded soldiers it produced, and the bankrupt people it created all fed the phenomenon of banditry. Politicized bandits were but one type of banditry. The banditry familiar in the preceding
warlord time also returned. It seems that bandits without a political smokescreen operated in smaller bands. A large band had very little chance to survive attack from a central power, which had been rapidly strengthened in its counter-insurgency force by the modernization of weapons. Perhaps it was for this reason that the bandits of the warlord era were seldom able to muster more than ten thousand men. Perhaps for the same reason, we seldom encounter bands of independent bandits of comparable size during the resistance period.

The Communists and the bandits. The Communists and the bandits often found themselves confronting a common enemy, the KMT; thus it is no surprise that they sometimes worked together. Mao Tse-tung's ability to entrench his forces in Ching-kang-shan was primarily due to the help of the bandits there. But soon he got rid of them, presumably because further tolerance would have alienated the local support which the Communists badly needed. We do not know what conclusion the Communists drew from this experience. A story by a Communist veteran of three years' guerilla warfare, however, may be useful in helping us understand their later policies towards the bandits. In 1935 the Communists of southeastern Fukien decided to form a united front with a group of nearby bandits in order to counter KMT pacification efforts. Huang Chi-p'ing, a Communist officer with extensive social ties to the people in one area where a group of bandits operated, was sent to do the job. In exchange for mutual cooperation, the bandits were asked to meet three preconditions: refuse the KMT deal for surrender, abstain from raping, and cease imposing protection fees within their own territory. We do not know how these preconditions were conveyed. But without much difficulty, Huang Chi-p'ing successfully persuaded the bandit leader to swear himself into a brotherhood, and by an extension of this relation, an informal alliance between the Communists and the bandit was concluded. By such a masterful move, the Communists not only eliminated a military threat but also gained an opportunity to win local sympathy within the bandits' sphere of influence. By refraining from requisitioning food for themselves and by publicizing their role in eliminating
protection fees, they won public sympathy for their cause without alienating the bandits.  

The united front with this group of bandits worked well because of the effective military help the Communists rendered. Through the good offices of these bandits, the Communists managed to form similar relations with many other bandits. But when Huang Chi-p'ing and eight followers went to negotiate a sale of weapons, their host Chou Wen-fan, another bandit leader, betrayed them; all nine Communists were arrested and executed by the KMT regular troops. In the wake of this tragedy, a Communist leader commented on the assumptions behind the CCP's united front with the bandits in the following terms:

As for the work on bandits, particularly those with political ties (with our enemies), I have always told you to "use them, but never trust them." When we try to use them, we should remember that we will have no trouble only if we have sufficient strength to control them. Their progress (to Communism) can only be slowly, gradually accomplished over a long period of time.

The caution against optimism about the bandits served the Communists well. But the romanticized view of banditry died hard. Late in 1944, Li Jen-chih found it necessary to repeat the same warning. While admitting that bandits were a product of semi-feudalism and semi-colonialism, he denied that they had any revolutionary potential. "Despite their peasant origins, the bandits change their political character the moment they undertake looting. Some bandits even collaborate with local bullies to repress their fellow peasants. They are a reactionary social force."  

With such a fundamental contradiction between them, the Communists and the bandits could never develop a lasting alliance. Yet in the face of two powerful contending central powers, the KMT and the Japanese, the Communists needed to be flexible, in accordance with their assessment of various power balances. Early in 1938 in the Yangtze Delta, the New Fourth Army tried to eliminate some notorious and weak bandits in order to win popular support, a policy which the KMT and the Japanese also
tried to follow. But this policy could only be applied where the CCP had military superiority. Bandits' possible connection with a contending central power would further limit the CCP's freedom of action in regard to banditry.

In general, the CCP preferred a political solution to military suppression in its handling of bandits. Outright attack was considered proper strategy only for recalcitrant bandits, particularly those with political ties to the contending central powers, the KMT and the Japanese. To the rest of the bandits, the policy was a mix of military and non-military means with emphasis on the latter. While self-defense against banditry was used to mobilize the local community, a political offensive was simultaneously launched against the bandits within and nearby. A bandit leader was usually offered three conditions for coexistence: no collusion with the Japanese, no anti-Communism, and no predatory behavior within CCP territory. Or he was advised to move his operations into enemy-occupied areas.

The key condition for coexistence was the bandit leader's pledge to refrain from opposing Communist activities, by which the Communists meant rent reduction, interest rate reduction, wage increase and other programs with implications for mass mobilization. After the CCP local systems took root through mass mobilization, the CCP then moved openly against bandits. A general amnesty was announced, but severe punishment was meted out to those who persisted. Attention was directed not only to active bandits, but also to their agents, particularly the landlords and anti-Communists among them.

The bandit leader's political opportunism was often an asset for the CCP. In the face of a strong CCP army, he tended to accept the CCP offer and make a public announcement of his retirement from banditry. When his underlings continued to operate, the Communists could exert pressure upon the bandit leader in question. If he refused to take responsibility and exert discipline, the Communists could then justifiably take action themselves.

With mass mobilization undertaken, the Communists could reasonably offer bandits an alternative way of survival and a genuine form of social protest. But in a major war crisis, redistribution of wealth and the
production campaign were powerless to solve all the problem of massive unemployment. The army, in desperate need of recruits, then presented itself as a perfect solution. It was traditional in China to use the army to absorb the unemployed during times of war and famine. Both the KMT and the Japanese had the same goal in their army recruitment policy. The CCP's essential difference was its insistence upon breaking the group ties of each bandit. No bandits were allowed to join the CCP troops en masse, and no bandit leader was allowed to command his former underlings within the Red Army. By scattering individual bandit recruits among the mass of CCP soldiers, the Communists hoped to exercise total control over them. Individual bandits were allowed to join the militia under the same condition. But no former bandits were permitted to continue to own their weapons. In the process of the militia construction, the weapons in their hands would be skillfully transferred to politically reliable peasants.

In developing their local systems, the Communists tried to exploit common hatred against bandits and stage struggle meetings. To avoid driving all bandits to the enemy side, however, they confined the struggle to the culprits most notorious by local standards. Towards the majority of the reformed bandits, the policy was to woo support. The local cadres were advised to give special consideration to the cooperative bandit leader, even if that required monetary subsidy. They were also advised to extend the same concern to the dependents of bandit leaders who had escaped to enemy areas. Ordinary bandits posed little threat because they were in a good position to reintegrate themselves into the social order. But in case of their escape, the advice was to maintain good relations with them. In Communist eyes bandits, whether leaders or rank and file, appeared one of the best channels by which the party could infiltrate the puppet forces, the most likely place of refuge for escaped bandits.

When the CCP developed their base areas, no bandit activities were tolerated in central areas. In peripheral areas, bandits were somewhat tolerated if looting was directed against the enemy areas, particularly the enemy forces. Of course, the bandits outside the CCP's military pale were potential allies the Communists actively sought. If a bandit leader proved amenable to CCP advice
against either the KMT or the Japanese, the Communists would proceed to transform his band into a CCP-affiliated force. But a military title would not be awarded unless the bandit leader accepted three conditions: 1) to purge degenerate and unreformable elements, 2) to abide by CCP military discipline and promise to undertake political education, and 3) to obey orders for transfer and reorganization. This insistence upon discretion set the Communists apart from both the KMT and the Japanese, who also sought to absorb the bandits into their military forces. Professor Kataoka Tetsuya mentions the Japanese use of the term "ideologization" (shisōka) to describe the CCP's transformation of bandits. In fact, this process was a form of " politicization." All central powers tried to recruit support from bandits, but only the Communists tried hard to transform the bandits into their own forces in reality as well as in name.

We have no materials explaining the actual process of politicization. However, a case in the Honan where the New Fourth Army operated suggests that it was carried out by political workers specially assigned to the bandits. Chou Ch'i-pang worked on two units of bandits known as the An-tuan regiment. The Communists tried to maintain friendly relations with the bandits in enemy-occupied areas, but unlike the KMT and Japanese, they bestowed no titles on the bandits who refused to accept CCP political workers. Sometimes the bandit leader, in his attempt to win CCP help, accepted the CCP preconditions but had no intention of living up to CCP standards of military discipline. A KMT report identified some of these units in the Anhwei-Hupei border area. The 160 men under Li Hsin-chien and Hsu Te-p'ei continued to loot and kidnap indiscriminately. The CCP recognized its failure to curb the predatory impulses of bandits under its jurisdiction and urged cadres to provide adequate financial support to each unit. If the unit in question failed to comply with new orders, the cadres were advised to withdraw political recognition and if possible, to launch punitive action to disarm it. As suggested in my research elsewhere, the CCP sometimes resorted to similar predatory practices as a way out of the financial predicament which stemmed from their inability to impose taxes, but CCP looting and kidnapping were generally
carried out discriminately. The victims were always confined to "traitors" and landlords of the "bully" type, two political labels which (like "bandits") were used with ulterior motives.

The above discussion allows us to make two important arguments. First, Communist policy toward bandits broke with a political tradition that had persisted since the mid-nineteenth century: that of absorbing military units under their own commanders directly into larger forces. Tseng Kuo-fan used this strategy to build his Hsiang Army; the contemporary Ch'ing regular forces did it as well. Later no Chinese political leaders were able to abandon this method of co-optation which was potentially harmful to centralized power. The CCP insistence on breaking up the bandit units, separating them from their original leaders and transforming their outlook, suggests the beginnings of political-military reintegration in China. Second, the "social bandit" image was very weak in China, and easily succumbed to CCP mass mobilization methods. It was worth much more to a peasant to have local security along with progressive economic policies (even of the moderate sort), than to have such "champions" as local bandits, who really represented no social ideology or class. The nature of banditry effectively alienated the bandits from popular support. These groups need to be, as Professor Philip Kuhn suggests, separated conceptually from the Nien type of community-based bandit, who was much harder to suppress because of his obvious links to local society. A group like the CCP, which was trying to organize and mobilize local communities, could not work through the bandits in wartime Central China, because these bandits really had no community base. All they could do was to use military and political means to eliminate or absorb them even if conditional, temporary alliance was always sought as a transitional measure.

The secret societies. In central China we encounter three types of secret societies: the Red Spears, the Green Band (Ch'ing-pang), and the Association of Elder Brothers (Ko-lao-hui, or Hung-pang). The Red Spear type actually included many variants, going by names such as the Red Spears, the Yellow Spears, the Black Spears, the Big Swords, the Small Swords, the Yellow Dusts, the Red Flags,
and the Heavenly Gates. They all shared a belief that charms, amulets and incantations would make adherents invulnerable to bullets.\textsuperscript{29} The Green Band and the Elder Brothers' Association had no such belief. Both fostered pseudo-kinship relations among the members. The relationship between a master and his disciples in the Green Band resembled that between a father and his son.

Also in central China were found the San-fan-tzu group (the name perhaps referring to children of the P'an family, P'an being the surname of a legendary founder of the Green Band), At-Home Societies (Tsai-chia-li), Ritual Societies (Tsai-li), and the Societies of An-ch'ing (Stabilize the Ch'ing Dynasty, or Peace and Green, or Peace and Celebration, depending on the particular ideographs used).\textsuperscript{30} The Association of Elder Brothers was characterized by a brotherhood of hierarchy which meant an unequal distribution of status, prestige, power and responsibilities among the allegedly equal brothers.

Han-liu, either meaning the survivors of the Han race or the members of the Liu Royal family of the Han, and Hung-pang, which can be translated either as the Red Gang or the Hung Society, were two other names we encounter in central China.\textsuperscript{31}

Roughly speaking, what we mean by the types of the Red Spears and the Associations of the Elder Brothers can be equated respectively with T'ao Ch'eng-chang's "northern variety" (the chiao-men) and "southern variety," (the hui-tang). Historically we can trace the Associations to the Triads and the Red Spears to the White Lotus and the Boxers. In view of the rural community base of the Red Spears, however, we should also consider the Nien and the mid-nineteenth century militia as their historical antecedents as well. T'ao Ch'eng-chang, in his pioneering study of Chinese secret societies, talks about a transitional form between the two major varieties, but makes no elaboration of this point. Instead, he divides the best example of such a form, the Green Bands, into two different sorts and put them respectively into his two categories.\textsuperscript{32} The Green Bands, strongly influenced by the Lo sect, a "folk Buddhist religion" as defined by Daniel Overmyer, appeared to be as close typologically with the northern sects as with the Associations, particularly in view of their historical legend and emphasis on the master-disciple relation.\textsuperscript{33}
The structure of secret societies. No comprehensive study of the subject will be attempted here. We will only attempt to discuss the most salient characteristics of the secret societies as a background for our understanding of the CCP's policies towards them. The secret societies have been widely interpreted as the source of an organizational network for major rebellions. Here our contention is that they existed primarily as many parochial interests independent from each other. Only the threat of a common enemy could bring them together on the basis of a common belief.

During the Ch'ing dynasty, the secret societies were often indiscriminately suppressed. The official attitude considered them to be primarily a phenomenon of the underground and lower strata of the society. With the decline of the Ch'ing dynasty, government vigilance over the secret societies relaxed. As the secret societies grew in this lax environment, the government had to tolerate their proliferation. In the process, the lower elite began to make efforts to tame these uncontrolled new powers for their own purposes. This further weakened central control, thus feeding further growth.

This trend was accelerated by the collapse of the imperial system and the decline of Confucianism as a structure of belief. In fighting the common enemy of the Manchu government, the secret societies made some contribution to the revolutionary cause. When the Republic was finally founded, the traditional suspicion of the secret societies abated because of the alliance. Unable to assert itself vis a vis the secret societies, the central government could only watch them become an increasingly acceptable means for upward mobility. In this process, the leadership of the secret societies also showed a marked increase in landlord-gentry participation. These changes, however, contributed little to any effort to combat fragmentation and parochialism within the societies themselves.34

The parochialism of Older Brothers. The unit of parochial interests within the Older Brothers Associations was the lodge (shan-t'ang). It is impossible to determine just how many lodges actually existed in the early Republican period. Within a lodge, all sworn brothers were classified into one of seven ranks and were assigned status, power, and responsibility accordingly. The lodge
head ruled like a patriarch. He controlled the lodge coffers, he decided whom to recruit; he interpreted the lodge covenant and regulated the brothers' behavior accordingly; he promoted the lodge members in hierarchy; he meted out punishments ranging from flagellation to death; he decided how to deal with neighboring lodges. In a word, he was the supreme power.35

The lodge leader was powerful, but his power was subjected to various constraints. He was supposed to be an embodiment of righteousness (i); without a claim to this quality, he would hardly have been in a position to exercise leadership.36 The elusive term "righteousness" can be understood as the intention and the ability to provide help to clients or adherents. For the several top brothers, this help might be very substantial. For the majority of the lodge members, however, it meant only sporadic help in times of financial crisis. The lodge leader helped them out on occasions such as weddings, funerals and illness. In cases of quarrels among brothers, righteousness meant timely, impartial and effective mediation. In disputes with outsiders, righteousness also meant total support for their cause. It was on the basis of these responsibilities that the lodge sprouted and grew.37

For the secret societies, the family remained the most valued social structure. By fostering pseudo-kinship relations, the lodge tried to claim the second highest position in a person's value system. To make the pseudo-kinship an irrevocable bond, a complicated and exhausting initiation ritual was usually held in a deserted temple. In the presence of all lodge members, the lodge leader read the new initiate the complete text of an oath. After the oath was sworn, a white rooster would be decapitated to show the solemnity of the occasion. The power of certain folk gods was invoked and esoteric language was used to strengthen the new kinship tie. The importance of pseudo-kinship and ritual lay in its restriction of a lodge leader's ability to demonstrate his righteous virtue to outsiders.38

In theory and practice, a lodge member could invoke common affinity and ask the members of other lodges to give help. But the help he received depended upon his ability to reciprocate. Often he could expect at most two meals and a night's accommodation from a member
of another lodge. But if he enjoyed a reputation as a righteous and generous man, he might be entertained with a lavish banquet and his host might disregard official sanction to help him. In so doing, the host could extend his influence outside his own lodge. Influence in such cases meant an ability to enlist help, a quality which should be distinguished from command.\textsuperscript{39}

Despite their legendary origin as anti-Manchu organizations,\textsuperscript{40} the Associations thrived on the non-political cause of mutual help. With the continuing decline of the Ch'ing dynasty during the 1850's, they were active in Hunan, Szechuan and Kweichow. Many lodge members of Hunan joined the Hisang Army to fight the Taiping rebels in the Middle and Lower Yangtze. When the Army was demobilized, many soldiers, unable to return to agriculture, tried to make a living by banditry, smuggling and other anti-social activities. Through them, the Associations became very popular among the mobile population along transportation routes in Kiangsu, Anhwei and Hupei. Many dislocated transportation workers, uprooted peasants, bankrupted merchants and gangsters joined the organizations to extend their sphere of mutual help. In the late 19th century, the Associations also moved into rural communities because they provided the poor a framework for mutual help. But the penetration of the lodges seemed to be basically confined to market towns in Anhwei and Kiangsu; only in Hupei did they reach the peasant community.\textsuperscript{41}

Whereas anti-Manchuism was a very imprecise and vague political notion, mutual help was concrete. When a lodge brother was involved in a struggle against a landlord, official or soldier, the responsibility of mutual help automatically required other lodge members to give support. But mutual help as the major function of the Associations could neutralize and overshadow anti-Manchuism. So when the enemy turned out to be foreign missionaries and their Chinese converts, as in the 1890's, the Associations were willing to give support to the conservative elite.\textsuperscript{42} The Associations had no barrier to elite participation; any member of the elite could be accepted as a lodge member as long as he demonstrated righteousness towards his sworn brothers and friends.\textsuperscript{43} But the lack of class barriers did not lead to an influx of the elite until the Associations showed their power potential and the central government was unable to curb their proliferation.
The ethic of mutual help within the lodge was so powerful that a lodge head could even swing his followers to the official side in the general suppression of other lodges. Tso Tsung-t'ang exploited Kao Lien-sheng's command over his lodge to suppress the Associations in Fukien. If the lodges were widespread among the Ch'ing military forces, we can expect numerous such cases of confrontation between lodges within the Army and lodges involved in anti-government, anti-social and anti-foreign activities.

During the Ch'ing, the Associations had already become a means for upward mobility. As we said before, this trend was hastened by the Revolution of 1911. The participation of many lodge members in the historical event helped clear much of the stigma that once attached to the organizations. Li Yuan-hung, Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek all tried to federalize the lodges. None of them, however, succeeded, because they developed no national program to replace the function of the lodges as parochial interests. Without central control, the appearance of the Associations as a legitimate means for social success only encouraged the further proliferation of the lodges and rendered them more intractable than ever. This was exacerbated when infiltration by the elite transformed an increasing number of the lodges into tools of their power game.

While their social base continued to expand to include members of the Republican elite, the Associations remained the means of mutual help for bandits, smugglers, gangsters, criminals, uprooted peasants, bankrupted merchants, unemployed handicraftsmen and dislocated coolies. The incomplete co-optation of the Associations into the established order not only continued to haunt the Republican elite in general, but also made the centralizing efforts much more difficult. The link between the Associations and the local elite made the lodges more parochial than before. In many cases, the lodges simply became a supplementary system of elite control, but links with criminal elements through the affinity of the Associations also debased the reputation of the elite.

The diversity of the parochial interests of the Associations made it extremely difficult to predict each lodge's choice of political alignment on each level of
politics. The Communists claimed a share of membership of the Associations of Elder Brothers, including for example Chu Teh, Wu I-chang and Liu Tzu-tan. But this should not lead us to overestimate the co-optation of the organizations into the established order. During the Party purge of 1927, Yang Ch'ing-shan, the lodge head of Ch'i-hsia and T'ai-hua, played a leading role in tracking down Communist suspects in Wuhan area. According to Japanese sources, the Lodge of the Five Sages was a product of the KMT's efforts to federalize the individual lodges. In other words, it seems safe to conclude that the Associations were more establishment than anti-establishment.

The Green Bands (Ch'ing-pang). The Green Bands began as a traditional form of labor union among the Grand Canal boathands in the early Ch'ing. They differed from the Associations in two major respects. First, the Green Bands bore a strong stamp of heterodox religion. They worshipped deified Buddhist monks and Taoist hermits rather than the legendary historical heroes whom the Association members worshipped. The Zen Buddhist stress on religious pedigree, by which one traced his teaching back to the legendary founder of the organization, was the second distinguishable feature of the Green Bands. While the Associations emphasized the lodge as a unit, the Green Bands attached the most important value to the relation between a master and his disciples. Thus the initiation ceremony did not require the presence of all disciples, although in secrecy, mysticism, superstition and the need for physical endurance, it resembled that of the Associations.

The members of the Green Bands were related to each other by a common surname. They were to a certain extent obligated to help members of other bands, but their first loyalty invariably belonged to their own pseudo-family. Disciples gave absolute obedience to their master, who in turn was required to help them. In other words, the disciples' loyalty was contingent upon the master's fulfillment of certain basic functions of assistance. In practice, this often implied an enormous financial responsibility. A proverb of the Green Bands, in this context, appears particularly illuminating. "A
propertyless person (kuang-kun) looks for a master in order to survive. If one does not have the financial means, it is better not to accept this person as a disciple."

Of course, the help did not necessarily take a financial form, but the proverb suggests clearly that mutual help was the major function of the Green Bands.

We know almost nothing about the early activities of the Green Bands. It seemed that around 1900 the organization began to spread from Canal boathands to other sectors of the mobile population. Because of the substitution of ocean transport for the Grand Canal, many unemployed boathands were forced to take roots in the communities with which they had been formerly connected, where they sought a livelihood as ordinary residents, or turned to salt smuggling or vagabondage. Their proliferation and emergence as an important organized force attracted many other unemployed elements and members of the lower elite. Lists of membership showed the disappearance of occupational barriers to entry around the end of the 19th century. Besides boathands, there were members with jobs like security guards, yamen clerks, low-ranking officials, merchants, police and even lower degree holders. The occupation of some members was vaguely referred to as "ploughing and studying" (keng-tu). We do not know who these were, but doubtless they were marginally literate people in the villages or rural market towns.

While the Green Bands remained an organization for bandits, smugglers, declasse elements and marginal people, the social base of their membership began to broaden. The weakening of central control in the Republican period and the laxity of sanctions against them accelerated the widening of their mass base. Like the Associations, the Green Bands were a tacitly accepted means of social advancement. Many highly placed members of the Republican elite belonged to the organization. Among the lists of Green Bands membership, we find warlord generals Li Ching-lin, Chang Chih-chiang and Chang Tsung-ch'ang, warlord politicians Deputy Transportation Minister Wei I-fu and Finance Minister Chang Ying-hua, the KMT former Ambassador to the United States Tung Hsien-kuang and the later CCP Minister of Posts and Telegraph, Chu Hsueh-fan.

If Hsiang Ying's observation in the Yangtze Delta is representative, there was a similar co-optation of the
Green Bands into the established order in rural areas. The bulk of the members were what the Communists would refer as liu-mang (lumpenproletariat). The trouble here is the definition of the term. In An-lo, Huai-nan, there were many members of Green Bands, but of them, we only know the identity of five leading members. Socially, the Communists classified them as liu-mang, but they were not true lumpenproletariat, because, economically, three were classified as rich peasants and two as landlords.

It seems that in the rural communities, the Green Bands appeared either as a supplementary power-network of the elite or as a socially acceptable force competing with the elite. And it was liu-mang who tied the Green Bands of the rural areas to the Green Bands in the city. In this light, we should give up the image of the Green Bands as simply a criminal gang in Shanghai.

Among the bandits, smugglers, criminals, gangsters and other propertyless elements, the Green Bands, however, continued to be a predominant force. Wu Shou-p'eng reports 14 groups of bandits ravaging northern Kiangsu from the late Ming to the early Republic. He notes that 13 of them belonged to the Green Bands, while only one was clearly affiliated with the Associations. Shū Hirayama, in his classic study of the Chinese secret societies, also describes the Green Bands as an organization of smugglers, bandits and criminal elements in the late Ch'ing. The predominance of the Green Bands over the bandits received further impetus from the co-optation of the Green Bands into the established order. In other words, the Green Bands now had more legal covers available for their antisocial activities. A Japanese intelligence source states that, according to Green Bands informants, most of the bandits between the Yellow and Yangtze rivers belonged to the Green Bands. A private Japanese source widens the area to include the Yangtze Delta. The fictionalized biography of the most famous Green Band leader, Tu Yueh-sheng, as well as some Communists' observations, all support this view.

The Red Spears. Red Spear-type organizations can be traced back to origins in popular religious sects such as the White Lotus and the Eighth Trigrams. But to simplify the discussion, we will confine our attention
to the Republican period, when the Red Spears appeared as a distinguishable genre of social organization. During the Ch'ing, official persecution had driven the popular religions underground, but with the decline of central power in the Republican period, the Red Spears soon grew into a socially acceptable means of organizing for community self-defense.\textsuperscript{65}

In the late Ch'ing, both the leaders and the rank and file of the secret religious sects tended to come from lower social origins.\textsuperscript{66} This seems to have been generally true during the Republican period as well, but the development of an indirect leadership of landlord-gentry relegated the religious leadership to a secondary position within the power structure of the Red Spears. The Red Spear religious leaders achieved their status by a knowledge of shamanist rituals; their training required physical stamina to withstand periods of long meditation, fasting and strenuous exercise. Believed to be representatives of gods, they usually had complete control over the members. The fanaticism and belief in invulnerability which the religious leaders instilled in their followers by charms, amulets and incantations often produced disruptive effects on their enemies which more than compensated for the lack of military training and equipment. Of course, in the face of a modern army, such fanaticism was suicidal, but the major enemies of the Red Spears were bandits and soldiers without adequate training or sophisticated weaponry. It was their effectiveness in dealing with these enemies that prompted many local community leaders to co-opt the organization into their self-defense systems. Not necessarily politically ambitious or rebellious, many religious leaders were nevertheless eager for employment; they readily accepted invitations to teach community residents their magical practices, and to organize them into a self-defense force. Their financial dependence upon the community leaders made them very susceptible to the latter's will. To assure absolute control over the Red Spears they helped to create, the community leaders often kept a close eye on their activities and immediately ended the contract when a native disciple showed the capacity to succeed the hired master from outside.\textsuperscript{67}

In most cases, the community leader made no attempt
to involve himself directly in the learning process. The rituals might have appeared to him both physically exhausting and intellectually unconvincing. He just controlled the organizations by controlling the purse strings. In accepting the community leader's offer, the religious leader put himself in a position not unlike that of the traditional poor Confucian scholars in the countryside. He implicitly accepted the authority of the community leader, and through hobnobbing with him, became himself part of the elite. Very soon, this process of co-optation and involvement by the community leader transformed the Red Spears into a multi-class organization under the leadership of rich peasants and landlords.\(^6\)

For the majority of the ordinary members, community defense meant self-defense. Once organized by the Red Spears, ordinary peasants supplied manpower, while the community leaders contributed financially to the hiring of the Red Spear master, the acquiring of weapons, the construction of walled fortifications and the coordination of multi-community self-defense. While what constituted a community threat was defined by the community or religious leader, the definition had to strike a responsive chord in the members' minds; otherwise, the efforts would be ineffective. A large-scale movement could be launched only under two conditions. First, one Red Spear leader might emerge as predominant over all others in the area. Second, the sources of community threat might be the same for different groups of Red Spears. During the warlord era, a common enemy like warlord general Wu P'ei-fu brought together many previously unrelated groups of Red Spears. But in many cases, the interpretation of the threat differed from one community to another. This accounts for the indifference many groups of Red Spears displayed towards the struggles of other Red Spears against specific warlords, bandits, soldiers, corrupt officials, tax-collectors, corvee or military impressers.\(^6\) During the Nanking decade, the community threat sometimes was interpreted as the KMT's attempt to extend its police control, to suppress superstitious beliefs and to get rid of local bullies and rotten gentry." The variety of interpretations of "community threat" also accounts for countless cases of fighting among different groups of Red Spears.\(^7\)
The community base of the Red Spears insured that they were more defensive than offensive. Only in a few cases, when the leaders turned out to be bandits and criminals, did Red Spears begin to loot and plunder like other bandits. In most cases, what the Red Spears desired was no more than freedom from outside interference beyond what was sanctioned by custom. So during the latter part of the Nanking decade, wherever the KMT demonstrated a capacity to reduce threats to the community, the Red Spears showed no overt signs of activity. Similar developments characterized the Green Bands and the Associations. For example, Tu Yueh-sheng was forced by the changing environment to forsake his illegal business, and Yang Ch'ing-shan was maneuvered out of his position in the KMT security system.

Let us summarize our findings thus far. First, despite their common affinity, the secret societies represented many unrelated parochial interests. By parochial interests, we refer to the lack of national vision on the part of the leaders of the secret societies. Second, the difficulty inherent in any attempt to move beyond parochialism was compounded by the co-optation of the secret societies into the established order, largely as a result of the weakening of central power. Third, the proliferation of the secret societies was not solely due to a few leaders' ambitions; it was caused by the weakening of central power and the ensuing political, social and economic chaos. The secret societies, in spite of their detrimental effects on the national polity, served quite effectively to further many parochial interests.

Before discussing the war's effect on the secret societies, I should say something about the interrelation between the Associations, the Green Bands and the Red Spears. Although they represented parochial interests, during the Republican period the secret societies did not prevent their members from joining more than one organization. In the Associations, it was quite acceptable for a lodge member to become a sworn brother of another lodge leader. During the Ch'ing, by contrast, the Associations did not allow their members to join the Green Bands. I suspect this prohibition was caused by the close ties between the Green Bands and the sub-bureaucracy of police. The taboo was broken completely
in the Republican period because of the changing nature of these two organizations. As the two secret societies were co-opted into the established order, the search for mutual help led the members to disregard their previous differences.\textsuperscript{72} The Red Spears had no rule against the admission of members of other secret societies. Thus it was not unheard of for a Green Band leader to be a Red Spear member as well as an Association member.\textsuperscript{73}

The War of Resistance and the secret societies. The war created massive unemployment, which resulted in banditry and a greater need for mutual help. In the panic, ordinary people flocked into the familiar secret societies. Liu Hsi-yao, now CCP Minister of Education, observed the popularity of the Associations in the Hupei-Anhwei border. In the area along the Yangtze, two sub-groups of the Associations, the \textit{hsi} character banner and the \textit{te} character banner were the major organizations. According to Liu, both were multi-class organizations, although the former had more members from upper social origins and the latter more from lower social origins. The two sub-groups feuded, but within each sub-group, the lodges operated autonomously without real coordination by a higher-level leader. Both the KMT and Japanese, Liu said, made some inroads among these groups; in general, however, the Associations in this area tried to stay away from politics.\textsuperscript{74}

Many rural Green Band leaders took advantage of the war situation to establish new incense halls and recruit additional members. We have Communist reports of two such cases. In K'e-t'ang, Yen-fou, Ting Liang and Wang P'ei-sung were two such enterprising Green Band leaders.\textsuperscript{75} Jung Chun-shih, the police head of T'ien-ch'ang and concurrently a battalion commander of puppet forces, also used his new position to attract rural followers. The Communists describe Jung's major motive as money. With two important positions in the county power structure, Jung did, however, have something to offer his rural followers in return.\textsuperscript{76} A similar story is told by a KMT source in P'u-tung in the Yangtze Delta. According to this source, most of the Green Band leaders just opened incense halls, then disappeared as soon as they had received their gift money from the new disciples.\textsuperscript{77}
The Associations and the Green Bands permitted their leaders to assert their prowess in military form. Hsiang Ying took note of this in the Yangtze Delta, but gave no details. According to KMT and puppet sources, the two most important KMT guerrilla forces in the area, the People's Self-defense Army and the National Salvation Army of Loyalty and Righteousness, depended heavily upon the secret societies for recruits. An independent source also reports that the Reserve Brigade of Su-ch'ien, northern Kiangsu, was formed primarily by the Green Band members. Aware of the massive unemployment created by the war, the KMT apparently tried to enlist the surplus manpower in its own cause. The secret societies became the channel for this effort. Later, however, the inability to break the secret society ties among guerrilla fighters became the chief obstacle to integrating each unit under an effective command. Many units only nominally obeyed the KMT authority in order to obtain financial and military support; they actually operated independently. They were bandit-like in many cases and, given time, they often influenced other units to become "banditized" as well. Secret society ties sometimes also accounted for the defection of the guerrilla forces en masse. As far as we know, the Japanese did not develop effective methods to dissolve the secret society ties within their puppet forces either.

The War of Resistance also caused the Red Spears to assert themselves. But unlike the Associations and the Green Bands, the Red Spears sought self-protection primarily through militarization rather than through the patronage of powerful figures. When the war spread into the core of the Yangtze Delta, the Big Swords appeared as one of Hsiang Ying's "seven manys"—many bathhouses, many bandits, many Green Band members, etc.—by which he characterized the western Yangtze Delta. It was common here to see members of the Big Swords guarding their communities in blue uniforms, armed with spears or large swords. The spread of the war into northern Anhwei created a similar phenomenon. "East to Ssu-hsien north of the Yangtze; west to T'ai-ho, Fu-yang, Lin-kao on the Honan border; north to Yung-ch'eng in Honan; and south to Yuai-yuan, K'ao-ch'eng": the red school (hung-hsueh) of the Red Spears became a common sight in almost every village. The commu-
nity hired Red Spear masters to train the residents and organize them into self-defense forces. In fact, this occurred in Huai-nan and northern Kiangsu as well.

We should not overlook the importance of the mass panic generated by the war in explaining the spontaneous mobilization. Afraid of life under Japanese occupation, the rural populace joined whatever self-defense organizations were available. The Red Spears fought whomever threatened their community: Japanese, local bandits, and undisciplined KMT soldiers alike. Attacks against these enemies also became a means of acquiring weapons for self-defense. According to some independent sources, the Kwangsi troops behaved comparatively well and for this reason were generally spared attack by Red Spears.

In seeking military support against the Japanese invaders, some Red Spears even asked the KMT authorities to incorporate them into the regular military system. Many Red Spear leaders also fought bravely against the foreign troops. In the face of their common enemy, the Japanese, the Red Spears of northern Anhwei showed a remarkable ability to cooperate among themselves. Here the Red Spears sometimes appeared as multi-county phenomena. The largest group might have some 7,000 fighters.

The sudden revival of the Red Spears and their bravery in fighting the Japanese captured the attention of some newsmen, who praised them as a significant form of anti-Japanese mass mobilization. But soon these journalists grew silent about the topic, having misinterpreted the source of Red Spear strength as nationalism rather than localism. In reality, the Red Spears fought the Japanese only when they threatened to infringe on their parochial interests. The Red Spears had no intention of fighting for a wider patriotic cause at the expense of their own community interests. Where the Japanese army showed no intention of harming them, and when the modern weapons of the Japanese army exposed the total inadequacy of red spears, paper amulets, and primitive rifles, many Red Spear units began to seek coexistence.

The reminiscences of a Japanese political officer, Yasushi Kumagaya, illuminate this aspect of the Red Spears. Immediately after the Japanese occupation of Pang-p'u, Anhwei, Kumagaya established an office in the city. He was visited frequently by leaders of the local Red Spears.
So impressed was he by their devotion to peace maintenance that he attempted to organize them for larger purposes. But despite Kumagaya's efforts, these leaders refused to cooperate. Even though mutually acquainted, leaders declined to do more than exchange minimal courtesies.  

In recognition of the peculiar character of the Red Spears, a Japanese army intelligence report about the secret societies urged the officers to woo the Red Spears through their mutual interest in community self-defense. It urged abandoning unrealistic hopes for converting the surrendered Red Spears into offensive forces. We do not know how successful the Japanese efforts along this line were. But as we find the KMT mobilizing local Red Spears for anti-Japanese and anti-Communist purposes, we also find some cases of Japanese success in mobilizing the Red Spears in fighting the Communists. Communist materials often report on the Red Spears being mobilized against them. According to these sources, the Red Spears of Chiang-ning, for example, were mobilized by landlord-traitors to help the Japanese attack Communist forces in the area.

Some Red Spears took an anti-Communist stand without directly involving themselves in the struggle at the national level. For example, in Ch'ih-chen, Ch'uan-chiao, Anhwei, the Red Spears and Yellow Spears tried to prevent the Communists from entering their territory. Red Spears which sought KMT support or pledged allegiance to the KMT cause seem to have been equally common. In Su-ch'ien, northern Kiangsu, a KMT Blue Shirt member and a leader of the Green Bands, Liu Shan-ch'en, had control over about 10,000 members of Big Swords and Small Swords.

As suggested above, the rural Green Bands and Associations had urban counterparts with which they were linked by meeting places at market towns and even larger towns. Many of the urban affiliates joined the KMT's anti-Japanese and anti-Communist cause. In 1940 a committee of manpower mobilization was formed in Chungking to promote secret society cooperation. It is unclear, however, to what extent the committee contributed to the KMT cause.

Within their occupied areas, the Japanese also made some progress in recruiting help from the two secret societies, the Green Bands and the Associations. Li Shih-
ch'un, the Police Minster of the puppet government in charge of rural pacification in the Yangtze Delta, was himself a member of the Green Band. His master Chih Yun-ch'ing, together with many leaders of the Green Band and Association in the Shanghai area, were assassinated by the KMT intelligence apparatus. Ch'ang Yi-ch'ing, a Green Band leader from North China, whose tie with Japanese intelligence can be traced to before the war, was assigned responsibility by the Japanese for organizing Green Band members in central China into pro-Japanese organizations. According to Hsiang Ying, a certificate issued by these organizations was better than an ordinary citizenship card in dealing with the Japanese security personnel. As a result, many common people joined the Green Band just to obtain a membership certificate from the Japanese-sponsored Green Band organizations.

The CCP and the secret societies. Materials about the CCP's early experience with the secret societies are extremely rare. In his discussion of Chinese labor history, Communist leader Ch'ü Ch'iu-pai describes the Green Bands and the Associations as organizations of unemployed and uprooted elements controlled predominantly by professional criminals, and therefore unreliable. I suspect that Ch'ü's view was influenced by the KMT's purge of the Communists in 1927, when some leaders of the Green Bands and the Associations joined Chiang Kai-shek's side. There are, however, no available materials that spell out the policy implications of Ch'ü's view.

We do not know what policies the Communists assumed towards the Green Bands and the Associations immediately after 1927, which perhaps reflects the lack of such a policy. But as part of the policy changes during 1935 and 1936, Mao Tse-tung himself authored an appeal to the members of the Associations, in which he urged the latters' abandonment of their hatred towards the CCP. After emphasizing the positive aspects of the organizations (for example, their involvement in anti-Manchu activities and their slogan of robbing the rich and helping the poor), Mao appealed to the secret society members' anti-Japanese and anti-KMT feelings to form a united front. Mao Tse-tung cited as exemplary some CCP members who held member-
ship in the Associations. In concrete terms, he promised legal protection for the Associations within Communist-controlled territory and offered shelter to fugitive Association members from the KMT controlled areas.

We know more about the CCP's experience with the Red Spears. The anti-government activities of the Red Spears captured the imagination of both the Russian Communists and their Chinese comrades during the Northern Expedition. Soon aware of the predominance of elite and lumpenproletarian elements in Red Spear leadership, the Communists nevertheless maintained the opinion that the Red Spears were a true "people's force." Under this assumption, they made comprehensive plans to turn the Red Spears into CCP-controlled peasant associations. But there is no evidence of any such achievement. Quite the contrary, the Communists seemed shocked and puzzled by the hostility they found among Red Spears in Honan and Hupei. Their trains were ransacked, and to reach the peasants they needed armed escorts. CCP execution of 24 alleged "local bullies and rotten gentry" led to an armed clash between them and the Red Spears of Hsin-yang in 1927.

During the Nanking Decade, the Communists seemed to have made some advances in their work among the Red Spears in the Wuhan area. The scanty materials available about the Kiangsi Soviet suggest that the Communists took a harsh attitude toward them because of their opposition to Party policies. In Kiangsu and Anhwei, far outside the Soviet area, the Communists made efforts to infiltrate the Red Spears and try to convert them. The efforts seemed fruitless.

In 1928, the Communists tried to utilize the Big Swords riot in Su-ch'ien for their own political purposes. Here is what the Communist leaders learned from the event:

[The Big Swords] assumed varied names. Organizationally, they were unrelated to each other. The leaders were primarily from the landlord-gentry and rich peasants. In northern Kiangsu, some leaders of the organizations came from displaced warlords. The chief reason for their emergence was self-defense against bandits, security against disbanded soldiers, and resistance against oppressive taxation. . . . The rank and file were impoverished peasants. [These
organizations] started to rebel when the reactionary rule showed signs of crumbling as evidenced in the chaotic wars among the warlords. Their slogans for revolt contained some revolutionary elements, but they actually only helped the reactionary leaders arouse the peasant masses. Sooner or later, the masses would be betrayed.

Based on this understanding of the Big Swords, this Communist writer warned his comrades of the temporary nature of any alliance with the Red Spears in fighting against bandits, disbanded soldiers, and excessive taxes. But during the alliance, the Communists should seek to educate the rank and file members of the organizations and expose the "true color" of their leaders. This heralds the development of a calculated united front with the Red Spears in a later period.

The CCP's guerrilla experience in Fukien offers another link between their understanding of the Red Spears and their later policies towards them in Central China. The Communist guerrilla fighters, in their defense against the "children's army" (t'ung-tzu-ping), a type of Red Spear group, shot only the leaders and taunted the rank and file about their leaders' death. The tactic was very effective in shocking the followers of the "children's army" out of the mental state of trance which pre-battle exercise and ritual had induced, and in making them surrender. The prisoners were then given clothes and cash and released after one day's indoctrination. Another case concerned a megalomaniac, Lin Hsi-ming, who dressed himself in operatic costume and thought himself to be the bearer of the mandate of heaven. We do not know what happened to him later, but we do know that the Communists of southwest Fukien tried to develop a united front with him against the KMT government. Once the alliance was formed, however, the Communists began to use it to transform Lin Hsi-ming and his followers.

Our knowledge about the CCP's wartime policies and practices toward the secret societies is equally sketchy. Generally unable to preempt spontaneous mobilization, the Communists nevertheless did sometimes seek to control it by recruiting the panic-stricken people into CCP-controlled secret societies. Early in 1940, P'eng Hsueh-
feng, a division commander of the New Fourth Army, was found to be organizing the Red Spears under the slogans of 'do not impress peasants; do not disturb people; and do not impose excessive taxes' in Ku-shih, Honan. In 1945, the Communists were again found to be organizing Big Swords in southern Anhwei, exploiting the peasants' magical beliefs for the anti-KMT cause. As regards the Associations, in December 1938 Communist Wang Shih-chung was sent to western Hupeih to organize the group known as Han-liu and native bandits. We do not know what he achieved here. In October 1940, the lodges of Golden Flowers (chin-hua), Restoration (fu-hsing) and Silk Treasure (ching-pao) were discovered to be CCP front organizations in Huang-kang, Hupei. KMT intelligence materials also reported the CCP's establishment of Green Band incense halls to strengthen its support in the puppet-controlled areas of northern Kiangsu.104

The CCP materials, though rare, corroborate KMT intelligence reports. Teng Tzu-hui, in discussing the CCP's dealings with the Green Bands in southern Kiangsu before 1944, described two methods which the Communists used to transform the secret societies into more controllable CCP front organizations. Party members with a Green Band identity were instructed to open incense halls to recruit local people. In the initiation ceremony, the recruits were asked to swear their loyalty to three additional conditions: 'do not work for the Japanese, do not oppose the New Fourth Army and do not oppose the Communist party.' Meanwhile, traditional patriarchal power in the organization was rendered more tractable by formation of a three-man leadership committee. The party appointed one or two members to the committee, instructing them to share power with the locals in opening the incense hall and exploiting its potential for Communist cause.105

In light of the case of Kan-ch'uan, Kiangsu, in 1943, it is clear that the major goal with regards to the Green Bands was to facilitate intelligence work and to prevent liu-mang from collaborating with the Japanese. Under puppet control, the natives tended to form master-disciple relationships with Green Band leaders within the puppet forces. Immediately after the puppet forces began to contract their sphere of protection, the local
people, in a continuing search for protection and patronage, were very responsive to the recruiting efforts of the incense hall. The Communists seized on this psychology to open many new incense halls, but in the initiation ceremony imposed certain controls. Ambiguous anti-Manchu slogans were taken out of historical context to suggest contrary messages. Comparing the Japanese "devils" to the Manchurian "barbarians," the Communists tried to arouse a dedication to exorcising the new evils from the land. Meanwhile, traditional Green Band sanctions against "deceiving one's master and violating one's ancestors" (ch'i shih mieh-tsu) were emphasized to insure new members' obedience. Reportedly the strategy worked well.\textsuperscript{106}

The Communists prescribed similar policies for organizing the CCP-controlled Associations and Red Spears. Warning cadres against their tendency to view the two secret societies either as irredeemable enemies like the KMT or as revolutionary comrades, the Party made it clear that any alliance was no more than a temporary compromise with the rural reality of spontaneous mobilization. Where the CCP was capable of initiating mass mobilization, no efforts should be made to expand the secret societies. In almost identical terms, both Liu Shao-ch'i and Liu Hsi-yao emphasized the patriarchal structure of the secret societies and urged taking control of the top positions within each secret society, transforming or neutralizing it, or simply manipulating its conflicts with the KMT authorities or the Japanese conquerors. To show his concern for the problem of the Hanliu group, in 1941 Liu Hsi-yao specifically asked each county party to form a special committee to deal with it.\textsuperscript{107}

Often unable to preempt spontaneous mobilization by forming CCP-controlled secret societies, the Communists faced many non-Communist-controlled secret societies where they moved in to carry out base area construction. In such areas the Communists' position was strengthened by the arrival of their military forces. But because those forces were still relatively weak, a united front strategy along the line Mao Tse-tung envisaged in his appeal to the Associations was continued and extended to the Red Spears and the Green Bands. The major goal was to neutralize the secret societies for mass mobilization; of course, the sights could be raised if the united front work proved successful.
Early in 1938 Liu Shao-ch'i had already noticed the Red Spears in North China. Viewing them primarily as a rural mechanism for self-protection against bandits, disbanded soldiers, and oppressive taxes, Liu argued that united front work toward the Red Spears was primarily a matter of military discipline and of light taxation. Few Red Spear leaders showed interest in national politics; despite their landlord-gentry backgrounds, in most cases the leaders would acquiesce to any central power that fulfilled their two aspirations. Confident in his ability to deliver the two demands, Liu Shao-ch'i cautioned his subordinates against unnecessarily antagonizing the Red Spears. Open ridicule and contempt for superstitious beliefs were absolutely forbidden. In undertaking mass mobilization, gestures should be made to show due respect to their leaders. Of course, in winning the good will of the Red Spears, the Communists had no intention of giving up any advantages their enemies might offer. They did their best to relate local conflicts to larger issues of anti-Japanese resistance and anti-KMT oppression. Various means, including direct military participation, were used for this purpose.\(^{108}\) Here we should not forget that both the KMT and the Japanese tried to do precisely the same thing with regard to the Red Spears.

With superior military discipline and a better tax policy than their political rivals, the Communists in general won political cooperation from the Red Spears. According to a KMT intelligence report dated June 1940, the cooperation enabled the CCP to claim control over about 43% of the Big Swords and to absorb a great number of Red Spears in Anhwei into their peasant associations.\(^{109}\) But both the KMT and the Japanese also made some progress in their parallel attempts to develop a united front with the Red Spears. We have already mentioned some examples of the KMT success. As for Japanese success, according to one CCP story, a puppet official of southern Kiangsu mobilized about 20,000 Big Swords from the three counties of Li-shui, Kuo-jung and Tan-tu to besiege a Communist force of about 120 men in Heng-shan.\(^{110}\)

In dealing with hostile Red Spears, the Communists were not hesitant to use military suppression if their military forces were up to the task. In 1941, the Communists coordinated a large military offensive between
Huai-pei and Huai-nan against the powerful Big Swords in Huai-ssu, Huai-pao and Hsu-yi. In general, however, military strategy was conceived within the context of a possible united front. A Communist story is instructive on this point. Pa-ta-chin, located in the border area between Ho-hsien, Chien-p'u and Ch'uan-chia, was an area strategically important for Communist efforts to link their military forces between Huai-nan and northern Kiangsu. A landlord and clan patriarch, Wang Shih-hsi, maintained "a small independent kingdom of his own" with the powerful backing of his following of Big Swords. His uncle had been killed by the Japanese while trying to defend his home community. The Communist author attributed the tragedy to the KMT's failure to send in the promised reinforcements when the Big Swords under his uncle began to attack the invading Japanese. Whatever the case may have been, Wang Shih-hsi was intensely anti-Communist and he tried to enlist help from both the KMT and the Japanese.

Determined to form a united front with Wang Shih-hsi, in 1943 the Communists carried out a commando attack which succeeded in kidnapping Wang and some of his followers when the latter were performing shamanistic rituals in the courtyard behind his house. Wang and his men were caught off guard and captured without any resistance. But far more surprising for the captives was the apology from the kidnappers' superior officer and the banquet awaiting them in the Communist camp. A toast was offered and dishes of delicacies were served; finally, the Communist host politely suggested that Wang Shih-hsi join in a united front. In addition to a guarantee of their safe return with captured weapons, the CCP promised to respect the property rights of the people and to refrain from killing within Wang Shih-hsi's territory. The Red Spears also would be allowed to continue to operate if Wang Shih-hsi promised to give all help necessary to the Communists in their anti-Japanese operation, to cease to obstruct the Communists' rent and interest reduction programs, to sever any ties with the KMT guerrilla forces, to cooperate with the Communists in action against local bandits, to keep secret the CCP's military activities, and to inform the CCP of enemy activities within the area. Under the circumstances, Wang Shih-hsi had no choice but to agree to the conditions. When he swore his loyalty, a
rooster was slaughtered, both he and his Communist host sipped the blood, and a united front was thereby declared.

Being only one of many Red Spear leaders in the area, Wang Shih-hsi was unable to deliver the loyalty of other Red Spear leaders in the Pa-ta-chin area. After the alliance, the KMT government of Chiang-p'u hsien was still able to mobilize about 10,000 Big Swords to attack the expanding Communists. The Communists treated the attacking Big Swords as they had earlier treated the children's army in Fukien. They first withdrew their troops to show their self-restraint and then returned fire when they seemed to be cornered. In the counterattack the Communist soldiers were asked to aim only at the yellow-turbaned leaders of the Red Spears and the khaki-uniformed KMT advisors. The killing of the leaders and the KMT officers had the expected shocking effect on the rank and file, awakening them from their trance to face the reality of bullets. After the victory the Communists released all captives. To demonstrate that they held no grudge against the Red Spears, the Communists not only apologized for the casualties, but also provided medical care for the wounded and funeral services for the dead. Of course, in consoling the victims and their relatives, the Communists blamed the leaders of the Red Spears for all the wrongs. According to the Communist story, this approach greatly facilitated their winning public sympathy; afterward, they encountered no further opposition from Red Spears in the area.112

About the CCP's united front work with the Green Bands and the Associations, we know much less. From Teng Tzu-hui's testimony, we know that the Communists' success in Ssu-Ling-Sui was highly dependent on the cooperation from the local Green Band, while their difficulty in Ssu-yang and Huai-ssu was compounded by their failure to win the good will of the same local secret societies.113 From materials concerning Pei-Sui-T'ung, we also know that the militarized Green Bands contributed significantly to the Communists' entrenchment in the area. No materials are available about the actual process of the united front work, but we know that two leaders were co-opted into the CCP administration. A Mr. Kao first served the CCP as magistrate; he was also entrusted by the CCP with the management of about 100 mu
of endowed school land. Later he served the CCP government as a deputy director of the Joint Administrative Office of Pei-Sui-T'ung. Another example is Wu Hsin-ya, a lesser leader of the Green Bands in the same area. In return for his acceptance of the reorganization plan of his Green Band, he was appointed as township head. Later he was made into a district (ch’ü) level cadre in charge of intelligence work. Clearly where it constituted a viable strategem, the CCP could act like its political rivals, the KMT and the Japanese, by using administrative posts as bargaining leverage in the attempt to politicize secret society leaders.

The parochial nature of the secret societies and the difficulty of predicting their political alignments required not only a very flexible policy but also local initiative. In other words, the Party Center had to treat the Red Spears, the Green Bands and the Associations primarily as a local issue subordinate to the paramount problem of mass mobilization. This policy was, however, inadequate in regard to the Green Bands and the Associations. Both the KMT and the Japanese had some success in infiltrating the two organizations through invoking common affinity and the tradition of "righteousness." The KMT's increasing use of the Green Bands and the Associations particularly alarmed the Communists into paying far more attention to the problem. Around early 1941, the Party center issued a directive on the methods of handling the Green Bands and the Associations as a part of its program to intensify the united front work with parochial interests such as landlords and the KMT local bureaucracy in order to buttress the collapsing facade of the larger united front with the KMT after the New Fourth Army Incident in 1941.

The 1941 directive provides a few details about the CCP's infiltration into the Green Bands and the Associations in the KMT hinterland, where the CCP believed they faced better prospects for united front work than in the Japanese occupied areas. Infiltration meant to the CCP further protracted struggle in the form of a united front, and a united front meant protracted struggle by peaceful means.

As we might expect, the Party here emphasized the importance of the united front from above, rather than
the united front from below, in their work with secret societies. The infiltrators were directed to give priority to cultivating the secret society leaders, but whenever the situation permitted, to try to cultivate the ordinary members as well. The point was to neutralize the secret society leaders in their attempt to win the trust and support of their followers. In cultivating ordinary members, attention focussed on their daily concerns. The task of the infiltrating members was to relate these mundane issues to the anti-Japanese cause. They were urged to take advantage of the KMT's resistance policy to agitate for Nationalism, to criticize the KMT anti-Communist activities as detrimental to the anti-Japanese cause, to awaken the secret society members to their lower class identity, and to use traditional slogans like mutual aid to lead the secret society members to an understanding of Communism. The infiltration work among the secret societies, in principle at least, was a replay of rural mass mobilization, in much slower tempo, in much milder form, and in a different social context.

Assuming the infiltration work to be a long term project, the Party center cautioned against assigning members with putschist tendencies for the job. What really set the CCP apart from the KMT in this regard was the former's full appreciation of the power of secret societies to assimilate outsiders, and the CCP's need for ideological immunity to such assimilation. Two types of party members were chosen for the infiltration work: former secret society members, and Party members with proven ideological incorruptibility. They were urged to take "full advantage of the backward, feudal and superstitious tradition of (the two secret societies)" to establish themselves. To minimize the risk, the Party urged its chapters to give top priority to the choice of infiltrators and the special training they were required to undergo.

In 1944, the CCP finally freed itself from the pressure of the Japanese pacification and began to step up urban work to prepare for their competition with the KMT for the Japanese-controlled part of China. In central China this policy shift led to greater emphasis on the work with the Green Bands and the Associations. In explaining the importance of this work, Teng Tzu-hui made three observations. First, the Japanese occupation and the ensuing social chaos had led to an unprecedented proliferation of the
two secret societies. Second, the secret societies were actually semi-open. Because of their widespread presence in military forces and government organizations in the Japanese occupied areas, any success in enlisting the secret society members would give the CCP an enormous edge in their intelligence war with the enemies. Third, the secret societies had a large number of liu-mang in their ranks. They could easily be used and manipulated because of their dissatisfaction with the established order. ¹¹⁶

In co-opting the secret societies, the Communists differed in their insistence upon developing, through mass mobilization, a local system which was functionally comprehensive enough to displace the secret societies. In 1939, the Communists of Sui-hsien, Hupei, formed their peasant association without interfering in the activities of the Yellow Learning Society, a local Red Spear type organization. Two or three months afterward, a Communist cadre asked the peasants which way they would take if the peasant association ordered them to go north, and the Yellow Learning Society, south. The peasants retorted: "Of course, we will go north; the peasant association really brings us benefits!" ¹¹⁷ Whether the story was true or not, the message here should not escape our attention: the Party had no intention of tolerating the secret societies as a competitor for the peasants' loyalty.

Early around 1940, the Communist need for new soldiers forced the Party to treat the Red Spears, the Green Bands and the Associations as a source of great potential in army expansion campaigns. ¹¹⁸ As the Party developed a recruitment base among regular peasants, the secret societies lost their importance as suppliers of recruits. But to undermine the popular base of the secret societies, the Party continued to emphasize recruiting secret society members. In 1941 Cheng Wei-san, in an internal party document, ordered a reversal of the earlier practice (in Huai-nan) of breaking any preexisting social ties among newly recruited soldiers by scattering them around in different units. Insofar as community and clan ties were involved, he ordered a reversal of this policy up to company level. In the same year, however, the Party center's directive still stressed the old practice of eliminating secret society ties within the military forces. It justified this policy on the grounds that it prevented infiltration by the KMT and the Japanese via secret society ties. ¹¹⁹
During their united front with secret societies, the Communists spared no chance to struggle against their leaders, but under no circumstances would they cite secret society membership as the justification for the struggle session. Secret society leaders would be subjected to struggle meetings only for their behavior as landlord-gentry, **liu-mang**, local bullies, corrupt officials, irresponsible militia officers, etc. We have no materials about the landlord gentry leadership of the Red Spears and the Associations, but the case of the Green Bands is suggestive. Mr. Kao, the Green Band leader mentioned above, was spared struggle because of his regional reputation, but the Party still managed to overcome his resistance to rent reduction. Wu Hsin-ya, a lesser figure in the Green Bands and a member of the district (**ch'ü**) level elite, was not so lucky; he was subjected to relentless struggle as a "local bully." According to Liu I-chu, cases like these two were very common in Pei-Sui-T'ung in 1943. By the year, many Green Band members of **liu-mang** temperament joined the CCP-led struggle sessions, attracted by the hustle and bustle and the chance to show off their bravado. But when struggle was aimed against Green Band leaders, there was a visible drop in participation. As the Chinese saying puts it, "when a tree falls, the monkeys run away in every direction." The ordinary members curtailed their visits to their leaders and attended fewer functions of the Green Bands.120

As mass mobilization gained headway, the Communists tightened their control over the secret societies. The Communists seemed to seek control through mandatory registration of all religious and secret societies, if a wartime stipulation to the effect in Huai-pei can be taken as typical. According to this stipulation by the public security bureau of the Border Area of Kiangsu-Anhwei, all religious groups and secret societies were required to register their history, their organization, their goals, their regulations, their sphere of activities, their sources of finance, their membership list and the resumes of their leaders. In addition, they were required to 1) "abide by the law of the democratic government," 2) to "engage in no anti-democratic and anti-social activities of a disruptive nature," 3) to "give no protection to
bandits, spies and criminals," and 4) "not to cheat members for financial gain."

The prerequisites were vague by Western legal standards, and interpretation was left to the discretion of the public security office. But in light of Chinese tradition, the stipulations appear not at all surprising; they were precisely of the sort that the traditional dynasties and the KMT adopted in their policy towards activities of assembly and association. Previously, however, such a law had often been rendered meaningless because of the government's inability to penetrate the lower strata of the society.

With the development of their local systems, the Communists could make the law unprecedentedly effective, but in recognizing the notion of freedom of assembly and association, they had to make some concessions, at least nominally. Nevertheless, the religious groups and hui-men organizations (secret societies) were absolutely forbidden to use their worshipping places or assembly halls to accommodate strangers. Except for their own religious affairs, charity functions, and funerals and weddings of their members, these groups were forbidden to engage in other activities; particularly singled out were gambling and profit-making. Moreover, by the regulation, the public security acquired power to despatch their agents to "protect and guide" (pao-hu and chih-tao) the meeting, which would be subject to suppression if no permission in advance had been authorized.121

Within the Party, hostility to secret societies was shown to be much sharper than this document suggests. In 1944, the Party leaders of Pei-Sui-T'ung made scathing criticisms of secret religions which had ties to both Red Spears and the Green Bands. The case of Chin-te township (hsiang) was singled out for the superstitious belief of its members. "Their heads were full of ghosts; some even knelt for three or four nights in order to be enlightened."122 In a study of Party life in Hsiao-tien-tzu, Kiangsu, a Green Band party member was severely criticized for showing respect to his master by standing up whenever asked about the latter.123 In Fang Yi's study of An-lo, Huai-nan, the Green Band leaders were actually landlords and rich peasants, but in his study of vagrants (yu-min), a term that connotes unemployment, laziness and other socially undesirable qualities, we find these leaders includ-
ed together with gamblers, opium-smokers, witches and folk entertainers. Fang Yi followed the general party practice of focussing his hostility on the leaders and ignoring their followers, whom the Communists considered as "only misguided lambs." Fang Yi's dislike for the Green Bands seemed also a reflection of the Party's policy during the rectification period in the early 1940's. In the rectification campaigns of late 1944 and early 1945, the Huai-pei regional Party considered affiliation to "feudal groups" (feng-chien t'uan-t'i) as objectionable as affiliation to "other political groups" (cheng-chih t'uan-t'i). By feudal groups, the CCP meant Red Spears, the Associations, the Green Bands and the like.

It was during the campaign that we find a rare study of peasant Party members' perception of the Green Bands. This study was conducted in Hsiao-tien-tzu, Pei-Sui-T'ung, in 1944. The following complicated image of the society appears:

1) Some Green Band members are good, and some are bad. It is, however, wrong to join an incense hall and seek protection from an influential master in a chaotic situation. 2) The Green Bands are good; the master is benevolent. It is good if all members follow him, but only a handful do so. 3) The Green Bands are feudal, requiring their members to bow in front of the master. They restrained our (CCP) activities. What we are doing is to weaken their power base. I have been a Green Band member, but I have never shown concern to the organization. 4) I do not understand the Green Bands, but kowtow and worship are bad. 5) I cannot tell you. 6) The Green Bands are of aristocratic class nature. 7) The Green Bands are good.

Among the eight peasant members sampled, there were three owner-cultivator middle peasants, two tenant middle peasants, two tenant poor peasants and one of unknown class. Six of them had joined the Green Bands. With regard to their party age, six had belonged for more than one year; one of the remainder had served in the Eighth Route Army for one year. But despite the Party's attempt to discredit the Green Bands as a feudal organization, the peasant party members' response was mixed at best. It was still hard for
some of them to conceptualize the organization in the neg-
ative light of the Party jargon and to obliterate their
positive perceptions and experiences.

Conclusion. Bandits and secret societies, two par-
ochial interests, grow only in the absence of a strong
central power in China. No strong central power, be it
the Manchu, the KMT, the CCP or even the Japanese invaders,
has been willing to tolerate them indefinitely without in-
curring damage to its credibility. In its challenge to
the status quo, a potential new central power may recruit
help from some bandits and secret societies because they
face a common enemy. But once acquiring the status of a
central power, it has to get rid of its two former allies
sooner or later.

The Manchus, in their inability to check dynastic
decline, began to coexist with some bandits and secret
societies, in reality although not in name. The trend
toward co-optation of bandits and secret societies con-
tinued as the central power weakened and collapsed. Dur-
ing the chaotic period of warlordism, there seemed no
distinction between bandits and secret societies on one
side and the established order on the other. The KMT, in
its challenge to the Manchus and the warlord order, sought
the co-optation of bandits and secret societies, but when
it began to consolidate as a central power, it began to
crack down on them. With the eruption of the war with
the Japanese, it was again weakened and the pendulum
swung back to the policy of co-optation.

The CCP, in its search for power and its position
of weakness as a contending central power, sought to co-
opt bandits and secret societies as did its enemies, the
KMT and the Japanese. It differed from both of them in
having a more discriminating policy in lending authority
to its allies among bandits and secret societies, and in
its ability to bring about a natural death of the two
organizations by a united front from below, which aimed
at taking over the bandit and secret society leaders'
following by fulfilling their social functions.

Being parochial interests, neither bandits nor
secret societies had any stake in perpetuating an exist-
ing central power, even if they had been co-opted into
the established order. It was this lack of political
commitment to any central government that enabled the CCP to form a united front with them when the Party emerged as a viable substitute for the KMT. The united front with the bandits and secret societies chiefly served to minimize the local opposition to CCP mass mobilization, a policy which most secret society leaders could easily see as furthering the anti-Japanese cause, and the popularity of the CCP. But they could not see its danger to their own powers, because the CCP united front, from above revealed no threat to their positions as leaders.

NOTES


2. Liu Jui-lung, Huai-pei k'ang-Jih min-chu chien-she (Huai-pei, 1942), the appendix chart and p. 50. In this list, Liu Jui-lung lists 79 bands of bandits and 2,300 bandits as the Communists' achievement in bandit-suppression. This list of bandits includes Kao Chu-chiu, Wang Ch'i-k'e and Li Ch'en-wu, people whom the Communists called "local die-hards" in other contexts. By local die-hards, the Communists meant the local forces affiliated with the KMT and opposed to Communism. Perhaps in terms of military disciplines, the fighters under these diehards were far from desirable, but it was also in the CCP's interests to single out the KMT-affiliated troops as bandits in order to rally support in its military suppression.


4. Ibid., pp. 143, 146. Nagano was generally sympathetic to the bandit in his discussion, but in the face of harsh reality, he had to acknowledge the lack of discrimination in bandits' plundering.

in Kei Ching-shan hsien-wei tzu-chih kung-tso te chih-shih.
In San-ho hsiang, Ching-nan, Hupei, the party tried to mobi-
lize the members to join an anti-bandit activities. In
a mobilization meeting, the Party found that all of the
seven members had suffered at bandits' hands.

6. Wu Shou-p'eng, "Tou-liu yu nung-ts'un ching-chi shih-
tai te Hsu-Hai ke-shu," in Feng Ho-fa, ed., Chung-kuo nung-
ts'un ching-chi tzu-liao, vol. 1, pp. 354, 491; Chang
Chung-wu, Shu-yang hsiang-t'u chih (Taipei, 1974), p. 69.
My stress on the indiscriminate nature of bandit activities
differs from Eric Hobsbawn's notion of social banditry.
See his Primitive Rebels, pp. 13-29 and Jean Chesneaux
Secret Societies in China in the Nineteenth and Twentieth
Centuries, pp. 60-61.

7. Fang Yi, 1944, p. 25. The following was a common view
expressed by the An-lo peasants: "If there is still banditry,
it will bring no benefits to us no matter how many rent re-
ductions you have carried out. One kidnapping is enough to
ruin me completely."

8. Tseng Mo, "Ch'en-wei hsiang ju-ho tzu-chih ho tzu-chih
lo sheng-mo lao-tung hu-chu," Fu-hsiao, no. 12, 1944, p. 27.


10. Ibid., pp. 177-181.

11. Ibid., pp. 123-125, 149-154. Sun Mei-yao was the only
bandit leader from whom Nagano could quote for his roman-
ticized view of social bandits.

12. Wu Chih-chuan, "Chu-hu ch'un-chung ch'u-chien yun-
tung," Fu-hsiao, no. 9, 1944, pp. 53-55; Ma Su, "Chang-
tun hsiang shih-yen hsuan tsung-chieh pao-kao," Cheng-fu
kung-tso, no. 36, 1945, pp. 3-4, 8. In the confession
campaign of Chu-hu, the Communists discovered eight former
bandits, whom they had not known through the pao-chia for-
mation.

13. Li Jen-chih, "Szu-Ling-Sui yu-chi ken-chü tı shih tsen-
yang chien-li ch'i-lai te," Fu-hsiao, no. 14, 1944, pp. 31-32


16. Ibid., pp. 128-129, 171-172; Ch'en Yi, "Chien ch'ih Chiang-nan k'ang-chan te chu wen-t'ı," K'ang-tı, no. 1, 1939, p. 64.

17. Fang Yi, 1944, p. 110.

18. Hsiang Ying, Hsiang Ying yen-lun-chi (Chinhua, 1939), p. 18; Akira Nagano, 1938, pp. 132-133. Nagano noticed a similarity between the rent system and booty-distribution. In share cropping, the landlord and his tenant divided the harvest into two equal shares and each one took one share. Within a band of bandits, the bandit leader and his followers all have one share in the distribution of loot, but the former would be given additional shares equal to the weapons the band owned. For example, there would be 500 shares if the band had a total of 250 men and 250 rifles. The bandit leader, according to the system, would be entitled to 251 shares: each of his followers received only one share. The rifle was considered to be the capital the bandit leader invested.


22. Ibid., p. 66.


24. Hsiang Ying, 1939, p. 36.

25. Li Jen-chih, 1944, pp. 31-33. Also see Ch'en Yi, 1939,
26. P'eng Hsueh-feng, "Tao Chou Ch'i-pang t'ugn-chih," Hsin-ssu-ch'un hsün-kuo hsien-lieh chi-nien-t's'e (North Kiangsu (?), 1943), pp. 63-65. In BI, Hsin-ssu-ch'un k'ai-k'uang (1940?), the CCP was accused of incorporating the bandits respectively under Yu Shih-ts'ai and Yu Chen-ts'ai in Nan-ning, Anhwei, and the bandits under Wei Li-ch'eng in Shou-hsien, Anhwei. In Hsin-ssu-ch'un tiao-ch'a chuan-pao (1940?), p. 10, the Second Detachment of the New Fourth Army was reported to be incorporating 2,000 salt smugglers from T'ai Lake into its ranks.

27. BI, Tang-p'ai tiao-ch'a chuan-pao, no. 23, July 4, 1940-July 10, 1940, p. 16.


30. Hirayama Shū, Chung-kuo pi-mi she-hui shih (Shanghai, 1934), originally printed in 1912, p. 76; T'ung-ts'ao chi-yao, with a foreword by Chang Shu-sheng, reprinted in Pang-hui shou-ts'e ssu-chung, originally printed by Ch'ung-yi Wu-hsueh She in 1932, p. 2; Keng Yu-ying, An-ch'ing shih-chien (1934), p. 16; Chu Lin, Hung-men chih (Shanghai, 1947). Chang interpreted An-ch'ing as "people celebrating peace," while Chu, as "ocean being peaceful and river being clean." Keng understood tsai-chia-li to mean holding the initiation ceremony at home instead of in a boat.

32. T'ao Ch'eng-chang, "Chiao-hui yün-liu k'ao," in Hsiao I-shan, Ch'in tai pi-mi she-hui shih-liao (Taipei, 1965), originally printed in Peking in 1935, vol. 2, appendix. In my view, the Societies of An-ch'ing (An-ch'ing tao-yu hui) of T'ao's northern variety and the Ch'ing Societies (Ch'ing-pang) of his southern variety should be considered as one type despite their difference.

33. About the Lo Sect, see Daniel Overmyer, Folk Buddhist Religion, Dissenting Sects in Late Traditional China (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1976), pp. 110, 113-129.

34. This observation is based on no particular evidence. Our later discussion will, I hope, lend support to my contention.


36. This is a deduction from my reading of Liu Lien-k'e, 1941, pp. 1-8. On the importance of the same notion in the Green Bands, see Ch'ing-p'u chi-yao, pp. 48, 99-108; and Ch'en Kuo-p'ing, Ch'ing-men k'ao-yuan (Hong Kong, 1965, originally printed in Shanghai, 1946), pp. 270-271.


38. Hirayama Shū, 1934, pp. 87-89. I treat the Associations as if they were completely different from the Triads only to simplify the discussion. In terms of legend, function and organization, the two can be lumped together. Being a member of the Associations, Liu Lien-k'e adopts precisely this approach in his book.

39. Liu Lien-k'e, 1941, pp. 162-163. Liu notes that common affinity does not automatically bring help from members of other lodges to a man in time of need. The person in need can be sure of help only after having made a name of being righteous and generous. So as a person who needs help, he has to be able to assess correctly his own prestige. Liu also mentions the necessity of showing gratitude for any help one receives. In his view, failure to
do so would provoke animosity from other lodges against one's lodge brothers. Also see Chang T'ai-ts'ung, Hung-men-hui k'ai-shou, in Pang Hui shou-ts'e ssu-chung (Taipei, 1975), p. 11. This book also suggests that a lodge leader has to make a name as a righteous person before he can expect to be received as a peer by other lodge leaders.

40. Hirayama Shū, 1934, pp. 81-89. Revolutionaries and the secret society authors tended to exaggerate the anti-Manchu activities of the secret societies and ignore completely their operation among the individual officials and officers of the Manchu government. They also tended to interpret any anti-social activities as fighting against the ruling classes and the central power that represented them, without examining the actual relation between political rhetoric and activities. From books like Ch'ing-p'u chi-yao, pp. 37-43, I cannot discern any anti-Manchu spirit in the Green Bands. But books by Liu Lien-k'e, Ch'en Kuo-p'ing and Chang Shu-sheng emphasized whatever anti-social activities they could find in the past of the Green Bands and interpreted the legends in an anti-Manchu way. For example, see Ch'en Kuo-p'ing, 1946, pp. 49-53, 57-67.


43. Ibid., pp. 94, 97-98. Within the top ranks, the position of hsìn-fu (the most trustworthy or new happiness) can be awarded to new brothers if they make great contributions to the lodge. This practice is designed to give flexibility to the promotion rule within each. Ordinarily a new brother has to climb from the lowest rank step by step within the hierarchy. In cases of special merit, he can only be promoted two or three ranks at a time. The position of hsìn-fu makes an exception to the rule. It enables a lodge head to appoint a new brother to the top ranks immediately. Both Hirayama and Chu Lin put the position at rank two; Liu Lien-k'e, at one. He says that a
landlord-gentry will be awarded the position of hsin-fu if he makes a great financial contribution to the lodge. See Liu Lien-k'e, 1941, pp. 154-155; Liu Shih-liang, 1946, p. 53; Hirayama Shū, 1934, p. 84; and Chu Lin, 1947, pp. 22-25. The position of hsin-fu is also written with ideographs which mean either a deputy in charge of punishment or a newly attached or a chief domestic advisor.


45. Ōtani Kan'ō, Shina no himitsu shakai Chinban-Honban ni tsuite (Shanghai, 1941), p. 24. According to him the super-lodges which Li Yuan-hung, Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek tried to organize are (respectively) the Deluge Mountain, the Continent Mountain, and the Five Sages Mountain. Also see Chu Lin, 1947, p. 14; Liu Lien-k'e, 1941, pp. 145-146.

46. According to a Japanese intelligence estimate, there were 30 million secret society members in China during the war. About 200,000 were in the area. These figures do not include members of the Red Spears. See Rikugun Shō (Sugiyama Corps, Chief of Staff), Shina himitsu kessha gaikan, (1939), p. 18.

47. Takeuchi Motoru, Mao Tse-tung chi (Yenan Period), vol. 5, (Hong Kong, 1975), pp. 59-61.

48. Liu Lien-k'e, 1941, pp. 143-144. About the KMT's effort to control Yang Ch'ing-shan and his followers, see Ch'iao Chia-ts'ai, Tai Li chiang-ch"un ho ch'i t'o t'ung-chih (Taipei, 1974), pp. 193-195.


50. Ch'ing-p'u chi-yao, pp. 5-47, 86, 92-116. There was great similarity between the Grand Canal boathand Green Bands and ordinary guilds. For instance Lo-chiao, a folk religion, served the same function in guild worship. The temples attached to the Green Bands also provided similar services of lodging and burial. But as pointed out by Morida, the Green Bands among the boathands served the
function of mutual help in anti-social ways. Without denying Morida's point, we may well view these organizations as a means of official control over the mobile boat hands. See Ch'en Kuo-p'ing, 1946, pp. 109-117. According to the legend (see ibid., pp. 51-57), the Green Bands derived the legitimacy and disciplinary power within their organizations from the Ch'ing court.

51. Ch'ing-p'u chi-yao, p. 40. According to the legend of the Green Bands, there were 129 lodges (pang), respectively belonging to three large clans (t'ang). We have no ideas about the relation among the lodges, clans and families. Available evidence suggests that the meaning of lodges and clans all disappeared as the organization spread to the settled land population in the late Ch'ing. According to Ch'en Kuo-p'ing (1946, pp. 281-313), only a dozen of the lodges survived in the Republican period.

52. Ch'en Kuo-p'ing, 1946, p. 275. The relation between a master and his disciples can also be seen in the interpretation of three female obediences (san-ts'un), a Confucian idea which means female obedience to father, husband and son. The Green Band manual interprets the notion as the members' obedience to the emperor in the court, obedience to the father at home and obedience to the master within the Green Bands. Accordingly, when a member allegedly violates the Green Band covenant, his master can expel him from the organizations, but his student cannot. The student is thus powerless in the face of his superior. See Ch'ing-p'u chi-yao, p. 86 and T'ung-ts'ao chi-yao, p. 21. According to a Green Band saying, "relate to others as relatives if they are your relatives; relate to them as your friends if they are your friends; and only when you have neither kind of tie to them, try to relate to them as a member of the Green Bands," the Green Bands were considered by their members as a network supplementary to the family system and other socially acceptable networks.

53. Hirayama Shū, 1934, p. 76.

54. Ch'en Kuo-p'ing, 1946, preface of the second edition; Keng Yu-ying, 1934, pp. 14-15; Chang Chen-yuan, Tao-i cheng-chung (Peking, 1940), p. 9; Ch'ing-p'u chi-yao,
The period from the Taipings to the Boxers is blank in the oral tradition of the Green Bands.

55. Ch'en Kuo-p'ing, 1946, pp. 66-67, 185-189; Keng Yü-ying, 1934, pp. 153-178; Chang Chen-yuan, 1940, pp. 147-150; Ch'ing p'u chi-yao, pp. 145-166. We should not forget that these authors are all urban-based. And for this reason, there is understandable downplaying of the importance of rural Green Bands.

56. Many other sources confirm the accuracy of Ch'en Kuo-p'ing's list of the Green Band members known to him. For example, see Kōain Kachū renraku pu, *Shanghai gekitan to ban to no kankei* (Shanghai, 1940), p. 42. On Chu Hsueh-fan's Green Band affiliation, see Hojo Tsutaro, *Chinban no hanashi* (Tokyo, 1939), p. 35. Chu was a disciple of Tu Yueh-sheng. With Tu's help, he climbed to the top within the KMT labor union movement. In the late 1940s, he defected to the CCP side.

57. Hsiang Ying, 1939, pp. 11, 18.


62. Ōtani Kan'o, 1941, p. 15.


64. See recently published respective studies by Daniel Overmyer (1976) and Susan Naquin (1976).

65. Tai Hsüan-chih, 1973, pp. 61-62, 75-76; Baba Takeshi,


68. Ibid., p. 83; Hsiang Ying, 1939, p. 18; "Kōsōkai," Jōhō, no. 3, 1939, pp. 82-83. This article is a translation from the English original, which appears in Asia magazine.


72. Chu Lin, 1947, pp. 109, 192. The change can be discerned in the changing interpretation of the Green Band proverb. According to Liu Lien-k'e (1941, p. 160), a proverb says: "A Green Band member who joins the Associations is like a carp transformed into a dragon. But an Association member would be skinned and his sinews taken away if he joins the Green Bands." In Ch'en Kuo-p'ing, 1946, p. 273, the second sentence is changed in its wording. The sentence in this case means that an Association member who joins the Green Bands merely demonstrates his grasp of a new situation. Liu Lien-k'e's study also suggests the change. He interprets the proverb mentioned above as an encouragement for the Association members to infiltrate the government-controlled Green Bands. On overlapping membership, see also Shanhai gekitan to'tan to no kankei, 1940, p. 3.


75. Hung Hsueh-chih, "Yen-fu ch'ü K'e-t'ang, Shün-chi, Wa-t'an, Lu-ch'iao shih-hsiang min-ping tiao-ch'a," Chün-shih chien-she, no. 4, 1943, p. 75.


77. Wang Ts'en-pin, Yu-mi chih hsiang (Taipei, 1974), p. 79. In his book, Pu-tao te hung-ch'i (Peking, 1959), p. 8, Ch'en Nung-hui met a Green Band member in a KMT jail. This Green Band member had been arrested because of his racketeering activities in the name of the anti-Japanese cause. He had no army, but by pretending to be a commander of anti-Japanese forces, he made money.


84. Ibid., pp. 76-109; "Wai-kaï shō Chûkyō jitsujō tōmu hen," Jōhō, no. 39, 1945, p. 74. According to a Japanese estimate, there were about half a million Red Spear members in the Huai-hai area in 1944.

86. Pao Chih-ching, 1939, p. 63.

87. Kumagaya Yasushi, Shina goshin zatsuwa (Dairen, 1943), pp. 163-164.

88. Rikugun sho, Shina himitsu kessha kaikan, 1939, p. 27.


90. BI, Tang-p'ai tiao-ch'a pao-kao, no. 23, 1940/7/4-1940/7/10.

91. Chang Wei-chien,"Su-ch'ien shih i-kuo-yueh lai te ch'un-chung y'un-tung," Fu-hsiao, no. 19, pp. 43, 48, 58. According to Chang Chung-wu, 1974, p. 91, the Big Swords of Su-ch'ien cooperated with the KMT and made a sudden attack on the CCP while pretending to attend a CCP-called meeting.

92. Liu Lien-k'e, 1941, p. 147.


94. Ōtani Kan'o, 1941, pp. 26-27.

95. Hsiang Ying, 1939, p. 20.

96. Teng Chung-hsia, Chung-kuo tsu-kung y'un-tung shih (Shanghai, 1949 , originally printed in Moscow in 1930), p. 2. Here Teng quotes from Ch'ü Ch'iu-pai's Chung-kuo tsu-kung y'un-tung te wen t'i.


102. Yeh Ts'ao, 1948, pp. 7-8.


105. "Teng cheng-wei tsai pien-ch'ü ti-i-tz'u ch'en-shih kung-tso hui-i shang te ts'ung-chieh," Fu-hsiao, no. 16, p. 14. See Chou Ch'ang-sheng, "Shao-ch'i t'ung-chih ku-wu-cho erh ch'ien-chin," Che-chiang ch'un-ch'ü cheng-chih pu, ed., Ch'ang-ying chi-ke-min tou-chen hui-i-lu (Hangchow, 1961), pp. 90-93; where we are told that Liu Shao-ch'i was very knowledgeable about the Green Bands. On his way back to Yenan in July 1942, Liu Shao-ch'i was accompanied by Chou Ch'ang-sheng, who had learned much of the sign language and other communication techniques of the Green Bands during his tenure as an intelligence officer. It seems that all intelligence officers of the New Fourth Army were required to study the Green Band customs in the areas where the Green Bands operated. The CCP's use of the Green Bands for intelligence work can be traced
to the early 1930's. According to Chang Kuo-t'ao, *Wo te hui-i* (HongKong, 1974, vol. 3, p. 899), Ku Shun-chang, a leading CCP master spy before his defection, was affiliated with the Green Bands.


111. Liu Jui-lung, *Huai-pei wu-nien ch'un-chung kung-tso tsung-chieh*, 1944, p. 8. In this internal document, Liu stated clearly that the CCP used military means to suppress the Red Spears in Huai-Ssu and Huai-Pao, but in a report addressed to the assembly, *Huai-pei k'ang-Jih min-chu chien-she*, he refers to the event as bandit-suppression without mentioning the term Red Spears. The same event is also mentioned clearly in a post-war publication. See Shih Fen, "Lo Ping-hui ch'üan te sheng-p'ing," *Hung ch'i p'iao-p'iao*, vol. 5, p. 211.


115. "Chung-kung chung-yang Ko-lao-hui, Ching-pang kung-tso chih-shih," Japanese translation, Jōhō, no. 32, 1944, pp. 66-69; and Kusano Fumio, Shina kenku no kenkyû (Tokyo, 1944), pp. 141-146. Kusano quoted from the CCP materials without giving the citation. Since he used identical terms, I assume he saw the Japanese translation of the CCP directive in writing his article in June 1942. The discovery of another CCP-published work which used similar language and a further examination of internal evidence of the directive later led me to date the directive around early 1941. See Hsi-pei yen-chiu she, ed. Ko-lao-hui yü Ching-pang k'ui-uang (Yenan, January 1941), pp. 84ff.


118. BI, Tsui-chin Chiang-nan i-tang tung-t'ai, 1940, no pagination.


120. Liu I-chu, 1943, pp. 22-23.

121. Su-Wan pien-ch'ü kung-an tsung-chü, Kuan-li tsung-chiao hui-men t'uan-t'i pan-fa. This document might have been issued around 1943. In referring to hui-men in Huai-pe, Liu Jui-lung also discusses pang-hui, by which he meant Green Bands. See his Huai-pe k'ang-Jih min-chu chien-she, 1942, p. 46.


124. Fang Yi, 1944, pp. 44-45. Information on class background can be found in the section on landlords and rich peasants, pp. 33-38.


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Publication of G. William Skinner's studies of rural periodic markets and the hypothetical system of "nested hierarchies" of economic central places (1964-65) introduced to Western scholars a new framework for analyzing social integration in China. This framework was seen to operate according to the "natural" boundaries dividing local society, boundaries determined by flows of trade (and hence by geographic and technological constraints on communication and transportation). Such boundaries were contrasted with "artificial" or "arbitrary" boundaries imposed by the central government's administrative subdivisions, which crosscut and divided (sometimes purposefully, it has been suggested) these natural units.

Skinner argued that informal local political systems as well as economic systems were articulated through this marketing network. Efforts to describe the relationship between central government authority at the county level, and local society below the county level should therefore, in his view, be bifocal. Implicit in this bifocal analysis which juxtaposes "natural"/"arbitrary," "economic/political," and "informal/formal," is the suggestion that periodic marketing below the county level was essentially private and unregulated, and that central political authority quartered in walled cities was dissociated from the exchange system of rural economies outside the walls. While Skinner stresses the crosscutting nature of political and economic systems at the chen and hsien levels (intermediate market towns and above), the index of the congruence of political and economic centrality on the political side is the presence of an administrative seat of government (yamen). Political control in
in market centers is largely discounted where such an administrative office is absent.

The results of our preliminary research complicate Skinner's analysis by describing (in certain areas) a system of officially licensed brokers and tax farming agents which bound intermediate markets outside hsien seats directly to local government and indirectly to provincial administration, suggesting that political control below the county level indeed follows the contours of "natural" economic systems but also constitutes a formal integration of these systems into the political hierarchy. However the critical issue is not the discovery that such integration existed. Does this integration represent a form of bureaucratic control? Or is it simply a compromise with and "co-optation" of existing local power structures?

The point of entry for any investigation of the relationship between rural markets and country government is the so-called brokerage tax (ya-shui) and the licensed middlemen called ya-hang. Katō traces the origins of ya-hang to Ch'in/Han times, but they appear to have assumed an important role only after the late T'ang and the marked growth in rural periodic marketing and interregional trade in the period after the 9th century. (Katō 1952-3, II, 545-46; Twitchett 1966, 216-17, 240-41; Shiba 1968, 391-407). Shiba attributes the prominence of such brokerage systems in Sung times to the wide variation and fluctuations in prices, to the high degree of risk in interregional trade, and to unit discrepancies in currency, weights and measures from market to market. To some extent such factors remained characteristic features of economic exchange in China through the Ch'ing dynasty and are frequently cited to explain the highly mediated system that facilitated flows of commodities in the pre-modern economy. (See, e.g., Myers 1974) It has also been suggested that this brokerage stratum formed a nexus of vested interest that helped to perpetuate the regional variation and risk inherent in Chinese economic organization in the late traditional (Ming-Ch'ing) period. These various
interpretations are not addressed by our own inquiries, which only provide insight into the character of the ya-hang/ya-shui system in late Ch'ing and Republican times.

The Ch'ing government collected a variety of local commercial taxes (apart from the well-known but relative late-comer the likin), subsumed under the general rubrics of k'o-ch'eng, ya-tsa, and niu-lu (livestock). All were collected by brokers (ya-hang) who were issued licenses (ya-t'ieh) by the office of the provincial treasurer according to quotas set by provincial revenue departments as specified in the Hu Pu tse-li. (Kato 1952-53, II, 546-49) Kato's perusal of central government pronouncements, and of local gazetteer accounts of ya-hang activities, shows that in the 18th century difficulties over administration of the tax already pitted the interests of provincial government authority against local county administration, and further involved conflicts of interest between county bureaucratic and sub-bureaucratic personnel and local merchants and traders. At stake was not, it appears, an important revenue item for the provincial government, which insisted upon the systematic limitation of license quotas and sought primarily to curb the issue of extra licenses by county governments. The official rationale for issuing ya-t'ieh was to regulate and stabilize prices on key commodities, apparently on the assumption that monopoly assured stable prices by holding to account a small number of brokers who were liable to the government for upholding certain standards in business practice. Further, the government consistently opposed unrestricted licensing of vendors of goods subject to ya-shui on the grounds that such a plethora of ya-hang would constitute a body of profiteers who would oppress the trading community (shang-min).

Local governments took a different view. At the county level, the issue of extra licenses became a form of lou-kuei—yet another source of unrecorded income for the financing of local government operations or for the rewarding of local bureau-
cratic and sub-bureaucratic personnel.

We might therefore expect the controversy over the issue of extra ya-t'ieh to sharpen in the period after the late Ch'ing reforms as county administrators began to search more desperately to increase revenue to finance local self-government programs. This is precisely the finding of Feng Hua-te's study of the evolution of the ya-shui in Hopei province during the Republican period. However, Feng argues that government interest in ya-shui shifted from one of control over middlemen to one of tax revenue in the period beginning after the Taiping Rebellion and then increased markedly as a result of the need to meet Boxer indemnity payments after 1900. The transition in Hopei was marked by a shift from a tax on licenses themselves, initially a relatively small charge [Feng estimates that in Chihli the annual fee was a few copper cash and that as an item in the provincial budget, income from licenses came to only four or five thousand taels], to a tax on the commissions collected by the licensed brokers (ya-chi), to a tax on goods themselves collected by tax farmers (pao-shui jen). (Feng 1938, 1067-1068)

The discrepancy between provincial and local governmental perspectives on the aims and uses of the ya-shui is important and persists through the period of this study. As income from ya-shui became a larger budget item, the struggle to control it at its source intensified. An early strategy employed by the merchants who were the ultimate targets of these tax struggles was to bargain with the government for the right to act as their own self-taxing agents. In one county in Shantung this strategy took the form of the i-chi or "free market," in which leaders of an entire community claimed the privilege of regulating the market themselves on the basis of historical precedent, barring the introduction of ya-hang into their marketing system. In other areas, a self-taxing strategy was employed by networks of traders in county seats who, through informal negotiations between their own leaders and the county magistrate,
could protect themselves from direct exactions by yamen personnel by volunteering payment of an agreed amount which they assessed and collected among themselves.

Self-taxing was a well-developed practice in Chinese commercial organizations (guilds or hui-kuan, kung-so), which employed standard procedures not only to buy off the demands of the government officials and preserve the secrecy of their accounts, but also to finance the daily operation and special projects of their organizations, functions ranging from construction and building maintenance to welfare and defense. In this activity, guilds might be supposed to function in opposition to the licensed brokerage class (ya-chi), which operated as an "outsider," an agency of the government. We might expect therefore that the strength of ya-chi (licensed middlemen) and of tax-farming specialists (pao-shui jen) in general would bear an inverse relation to the strength of commercial organizations (guilds or chambers of commerce) in any area. I thus initially posited that the ya-hang was a phenomenon associated with a particular scale of economic and political activity in China; that ya-chi operated primarily in the interstices between standard markets and central market towns because in the higher-level markets their function would be assumed by powerful and well-articulated guild organizations.

Niida Noboru's work on Peking guilds does not, however, bear out this hypothesis. Instead his findings on the relationship between ya-hang and guild organizations suggest regional variation in the status and importance of ya-hang. In Peking itself the relationship between guilds and ya-hang ranged from one of corporate identity to mutual exclusion and competition. That is, in the medicinal herbs guild (Yao-yeh T'ung-yeh Kung-hui), ya-hang were included as guild members; in cooking oil marketing, the cooking oil guild itself performed the brokerage functions of a ya-hang. Burgess (1928, 205-207) saw ya-hang as competitors of guild
organization and viewed the revival of guild activity and solidarity in the late 1920s and early 1930s as a response to government efforts to extend the licensing and monopoly privileges of ya-hang (which threatened to undermine the prerogatives of the guilds).

The problem of the relationship between the central government and trade monopolies is thus complicated by the internal structure of the monopolies themselves. Nor is this relationship illuminated by reference to "public" and "private" sectors of the economy or society, or to "bureaucratic" and "personalistic" systems of control. Given the context of self-taxing systems, what appears on paper (i.e. in provincial statutes of the late 1930s) to be an effort to bureaucratize the licensed brokerage system may (in fact) at the local level represent a continuation of patterns of mutual accommodation which characterized the relationship between government and local society in Ch'ing times.

Excellent examples of this relationship are offered in Negishi's study of Shanghai guilds. Negishi takes the general view that the state government and civil society were analytically and systemically distinct sectors of Chinese culture. In particular, his characterization of merchant or trade organizations sees them growing in response to government laws or government initiatives which require a certain kind of collective or collaborative response. That response in turn becomes the impetus for forming an organization which finally transcends its immediate function and assumes other functions in behalf of its members—as if the government breathes life into sectors of civil society, which can then subsist and ultimately thrive on their own.

The pattern described by Negishi takes the following form. A high official (province-level—e.g. a governor) seeks money for military expenditures, and approaches a compatriot (i.e. someone from the same province as he) who is highly placed in business in the province under his jurisdiction. The object of this request then gathers
a group of peers who arrange among themselves, and solicit from other businessmen, to supply the necessary funds. In the process they form a voluntary occupational or t'ung-hsiang organization which draws up by-laws and keeps records of funds raised. This organization undertakes to perform functions that leaders agree are needed and can be reasonably managed with the resources available to the group. First among these functions are ritual and ceremonial events, and provision of a hall or facility in which to carry these out; second priority tends to go to what we would call philanthropic concerns, particularly care for the sick and provision of funeral services and proper burial to the dead. In such cases, government action thus becomes the occasion for a sequential process that is largely based on private initiative once it is begun. The presumed explanation for this (not offered by Negishi, who probably took it for granted) is that forming such organizations without prior government acknowledgement and approval was risky and even impossible. The government did not issue charters or formally sanction such groups in any case; however it seems to have negotiated readily with such organizations once they were founded; and even to have turned over to them numerous tax-collection and other responsibilities that we would expect to belong to the realm of "public" government activity.

A complicated example of this phenomenon is the founding of the Silk Guild (Ssu-yeh Hui-kuan) in Shanghai in 1860. (Negishi 1951, 243-47ff.) The occasion was the solicitation of funds by the Provincial Governor of Chekiang through the Governor of Kiangsu (as he wanted to approach the silk traders in Shanghai, who were mostly Chekiangese). Negotiations to collect this money with managers (ching-ying) of silk firms (ssu-chan) resulted in the founding of the guild, which announced that it would care for silk-traders (t'ung-yeh-che) who were in need of medical treatment, and would then expand its functions. This announcement was greeted with a 1,000 tael contribution from the Chekiang governor in question.
From this example we learn that provincial ties were an important ingredient in negotiations even though they had to be carried out through legitimate bureaucratic channels—the Chekiang governor could not bypass the Kiangsu governor and go directly to the Shanghai merchants. We also see the reciprocal nature of these agreements—one contribution leads to another, and the flow of funds goes both ways. Morse found the same thing during his field work on Peking guilds (1932, 44-45), when he noted that high officials could regularly expect to be solicited for contributions to guilds of fellow-provincials.

But the issue of government-merchant relations is complicated further in the silk trade because all silk brokers were required by law to purchase ya-hang (brokerage) licenses from the government in order to trade legally. Therefore all the firms in the silk guild had long been subject to government inspection and taxation as ya-hang, prior to the founding of the guild itself. The guild organization was a means of representing solidarity not only as an occupational group, but also as a t'ung-hsiang group composed primarily of traders from Hu-chou. As ya-hang these traders had collaborated according to a principle they called lien-huan pao-chieh (mutual guarantee). Five established firms united (lien-huan) to back (pao-chieh) a new ya-hang applicant in order to guarantee that the government would collect its fees regardless of malfeasance or losses. This of course protected the government against shortfalls in the license tax system, probably not the most important consideration because at that point ya-t'ieh fees were a minor revenue source. More important was the protection afforded the silk merchants themselves from government action against their whole group due to the performance of only one member.

After 1860 and the founding of the Silk Guild, the Guild began to act as an agent for its members in requesting official licenses. In this way the guild established itself, in effect, as a private licensing agency for the government and as control-
ler of entry into the raw silk market itself, since licenses could be obtained only by following procedures set by the guild. These included payment of a 120 tael Shanghai silver fee, a banquet for members, and so forth.

Still another thread in the web of relationships joining the government and the guild was the Ssu-chuan Tsung-chü (The General Revenue Office for the Silk Tax), which had contributed some of the funds toward the founding of the Guild, and which had been a major underwriter of guild expenditures since the middle of 1860. The Silk Tax Office after that time had deposited .4% of its revenue (four cash of every 100 taels collected) with the guild. This sum went into what was apparently a discretionary fund controlled by the board of directors of the Guild. The fund consisted of this money and other "deposits" from visiting silk merchants (k'o-pang).

Another example of the dialectical interaction between a government agency and a private urban organization is the growth of a Peking shui-hui ("water association" or fire department) described by Imahori Seiji in his work on Peking local government. (Imahori 1947, 23-24) The association's own record of its history, inscribed on a stone stele in 1913, describes the evolution of a group originally founded as a volunteer fire department into a general relief and peacekeeping force for a sector of the city, all under the sanction (and frequently at the request) of the official security office (Tu-ch'a Yuan). Protection from pillaging by refugees from the countryside, relief for flood victims, peacekeeping during the Boxer Uprising, as well as fire-fighting, were all functions performed by this organization because of its demonstrated effectiveness in mobilizing support.

Such a dialectic between governmental sanction and private initiative can be viewed as a relationship of co-optation, in which self-interest serves public interest and the government merely takes advantage of that fact. On the other hand,
much of the success of such collaboration depended upon a self-image of public responsibility—a sense of service or "cadredom"—which characterizes local leadership in Chinese culture. Because such mutual collaboration fit so well the expectations of both parties, the impetus to "bureaucratize" by extending central control directly to the local level was not strong. In considering the factors involved in any movement to "bureaucratize" a privately-performed function, a variety of sub-interest groups and constituencies must be taken into account. Foremost among these factors is the relative strength of center, province, and county level governments in exacting and distributing the country's resources. With reference to taxation and local trading communities (the subject of this paper), the following considerations are important: 1) county-level finance fell under the jurisdiction of the provincial revenue bureau (Sheng Ts'ai-cheng T'ing) through county branch offices called collection departments (Hsien Shou-cheng Chu) during the first half of the Republican period. This system did not begin to change formally until the early 1930s, and in fact was probably never altered in some areas because of the war and local administrative variation. (See Philip Kuhn's account of the organization of local fiscal administration elsewhere in this volume.) 2) local self-government programs were part of a plan for both political and economic self-sufficiency at the county level. Thus the "new county" reforms of 1939 placed all responsibility for county programs (both planning and financing) in the hands of county administration. In the long run this measure, while heavily overlain with ideological appeals to democratic ideals, would have undercut province-level authority at its most critical point—fiscal control.

*The term cadredom is Philip Kuhn's, and was coined in a discussion of local leadership in Peking following a presentation by David Strand.
Preliminary evidence presented in this paper suggests that, while these reforms were seldom implemented because of the persistence of provincial autonomy in the hands of warlord leaders, nonetheless the county level was the level of government best suited to efficient revenue collection given the limited supervisory capacity of the government bureaucracy. Only county-level leaders had the information and the connections to ensure that government tax quotas would be met. Their observance of province-level directives, modelled in turn after directives issued from Nanking, was observance in form, but not necessarily in fact.* The cases cited here to illustrate this argument concern the administration of ya-hang (licensed brokers) and the ya-shui (brokerage taxes) which is well-documented in the North China plain, particularly in Hopei province where it was an important revenue source, thanks to the efforts of Japanese survey teams and to Chinese studies of rural reconstruction efforts. Their data can be used to outline the configuration of local commercial interests and to demonstrate how local brokerage networks interacted with the government.

Ya-hang (licensed brokerages) were groups of merchants who purchased from the government the privilege of monopolizing the local wholesale trade in certain key commodities—grain, silk, cloth, wine, medicinal herbs, livestock. They were expected to perform, under government auspices, at least one of the following three services: the introduction of trading parties (from which function they might often acquire the role of agent or representative of buyer or seller); guarantee of the

*The regularity with which central and province-level decrees were heeded by lower levels of government is a persuasive example of the normative power of a central administrative apparatus with a slim stock of coercive or remunerative sanctions that could have been applied to violators.
satisfactory completion of the transaction; and securing of standard weights and measures. (Ch'ü 1933) In an imperfect market with limited information, high risks, and high variability in the composition of groups who bought and sold goods, these brokers provided security and predictability backed by their personal reputations and by the sanction of the central government.¹

When the government undertook by statute to regularize and standardize the terms of trade in order to tax it more systematically, the role of such personal guarantors was formally sanctioned, and efforts were made to expand the personal guarantor principle through officially-sponsored organizations, including Chambers of Commerce. Thus decentralized human networks rather than centralized bureaucratic machinery continued to coordinate the complex system of rural-urban trade and exchange at the county level. The efficiency of this system and its flexibility in responding to variations in locality and in supply and demand are graphic representations of organizing principles informing traditional Chinese society that still persist in some forms: self-assessment and collection procedures organized and carried out by local organizations which in turn mediate between the central government and their own constituency to protect local interests; reliance on status rather than on contract and on negotiated settlements rather than on arbitrary quotas in the collection of taxes; and the emphasis on owned or real property as a measure of social status and of income and importance in revenue collection and credit supply.

Chinese society before 1949 bears a strong resemblance to the segmentary model developed by Southall for Alur society and applied recently by Burton Stein to South India. That is, it was a society permeated by competing local organizational networks forged from inter-personal ties based on kinship, territoriality, and occupation. It has been these networks that have formed the conduits for the process of social change. And

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it is with these networks that the central government interacted historically in its role as arbiter of competing local interests and as extractor of local resources.

This paper is concerned with the extraction of commercial taxes at the county level. During the period beginning with the late Ch'ing reforms, important changes occurred in the administration of central government tax programs which bear on the discussion that follows. One was an increasing reliance on commercial taxes and a consequent effort to expand the commercial tax base. The other was the gradual development of a separate category of local taxes (ti-fang shui) to finance local self-government programs. In both these efforts, the government committed itself to a program of rationalizing and bureaucratizing tax collecting procedures. The aim was to gradually eliminate the participation of non-bureaucratic personnel (particularly the clerkly class and the local elite) from tax collecting procedures. Thereby the government sought to minimize the percentage of funds extracted by intermediaries in the form of graft or the "customary fees" (lou-kuei) which had been regarded as necessary evils in the ad hoc construction of an infrastructure to finance local government operations. Studies carried out in North China after 1925 provide some examples of the ways in which these programs were implemented at the local level, where county governments confronted the merchant community.

The relative importance of the brokerage tax as a revenue item presents a problem. As part of a package of fiscal reforms initiated in the Republican period, it illustrates the variety of issues raised by tax reform: the elimination of peculation by tax farmers, the contest for power between center, province, and county administrators; the streamlining of tax collection to ease burdens on individual taxpayers, eliminate duplications, and increase administrative efficiency; the protection of trade and commerce. All these were considerations which might have the effect of either de-
creasing or increasing the income generated by a brokerage tax and thus represent conflicting claims. All were cited as motives for the tax reform efforts of the Republican period.

Data in local gazetteers in Hopei and Shantung indicate that the land tax remained the largest single source of revenue collected at the county level in those provinces, at least through 1925. However, it is also clear that commercial taxes formed a critical part of the revenue required for new programs, particularly education and police protection, and for rising administrative costs. Issues became confused: new needs brought new taxes which created new official tax bureaus and new private tax-collecting networks. In the absence of systematic programs to regulate these new sources of income, the effect on taxpayers was a perception of endless surcharges with an administrative echelon supporting itself at each level of transmission. Protests from the county level against excessive taxation primarily reflect the concern that revenues were going not to the state but to pay tax farmers. (See, e.g., Kuan hsien (Shantung) chih 1934, 3:55-56a) Constituencies competing for the taxpayer's dollar included taxfarmers and licensed brokers, county clerks and collectors, the county yamen itself, the provincial revenue bureau at the county level, the provincial revenue department, and the central government. Reform proposals aimed at protecting traders and consumers invariably reflect a concern for expanding the prerogatives of one of these constituencies at the expense of another.

The importance of the brokerage tax therefore lies more in what it can teach us about rhetoric and politics; less in its role as a budget item.²

In 1925 the government of Chihli (Hopeh) province introduced into the provincial statutes a new version of the brokerage tax (ya-shui) ordinance governing the collection of the tax at the county level.³ The statute legalized the practice of farming out to individual merchants the collec-
tion of a brokerage tax on commercial transactions. The new law, in effect for ten years thereafter, culminated a process whereby the provincial government sought to hua ssu wei kuan—transform private agents into public functionaries—by giving formal sanction to private merchants acting as revenue agents for the government. This legislation appears as the climax of a series of steps whereby the government sought to reform the local and provincial commercial tax system by increasing the efficiency of collection procedures. Included in these measures was the transformation of the customary fees into a regular legitimate tax category called "public benefits tax" (kung-i chüan).

Such an arrangement with private merchants guaranteed the government the highest possible return from its tax program by enabling the bureaucratic administration to conduct its business through existing local networks which the government did not have the resources to countervene or circumvent. In that respect the legislation conforms to an historical pattern of collaboration between public officials and private merchants that has been characteristic of Chinese commercial policy. At the same time, such tax policies can be shown to build on sets of shared interests articulated at the local level by leading merchants formally organized into Chambers of Commerce, or informally grouped in tax-farming networks. Such formal and informal organizations mediated between the central government and the local trading community. They also, in the process, increased their influence in the local commercial system.

In an article published in 1937, Feng Hua-te offers a general outline of the evolution of the brokerage tax in Ting hsien, from what was essentially a regulatory licensing procedure that generated an insignificant amount of revenue in the form of small fees, into a lucrative commercial tax on a wide variety of exchange transactions involving key commodities from livestock to vegetables, wine, and cloth.4 (Feng 1937, 286-87)
Phase I. License tax (ya-t'ieh shui)
The tax on licenses for brokers (ya-hang) who monopolized the exchange of agricultural and consumer goods originated in the early 17th century. Its intent was to limit the number of brokers mediating the flow of goods from producer to consumer by setting quotas for brokers in certain trade specialties in each county. In keeping with traditional imperial commercial policy, such intervention in the flow of free trade was deemed necessary to preserve an equitable distribution of profits, to keep down consumer prices, and even to protect the merchants themselves from the illicit profiteering of a "parasitic" group of middlemen.

That the limitation of these brokers was a recurrent problem is shown by preliminary evidence from local gazetteers as early as the 16th century (in Kwangtung) and the 19th century (in Shantung). These reproduce accounts of local officials being exhorted by resident traders and gentry to claim tax-exempt status for local markets in order to eliminate the plethora of ya-hang living off of the trading system and "disturbing the markets." In the Shantung case, such markets became known as i-chi (free markets) where licensed brokers were proscribed.

Incentive to alter the licensing policy at the turn of the 20th century seems to have come primarily from the pressure on provincial governments to produce additional revenue to meet Boxer indemnity payments. One possible source of funds was the profits of the brokers they licensed with monopoly privileges. Ignored for the time were the customary fees (lou-kuei) paid at the county level where licenses were issued. These fees remained outside the formal tax structure.

Phase 2. The brokerage profit surcharge (ya-hang ying-yü)
The late Ch'ing reforms only succeeded in implementing a tax on the "profits" of regular licensed brokers in 1904. These brokers continued to remit customary fees to the county in a manner and amount which eluded provincial control.
Phase 3. The county brokerage tax (hsien-cheng ya-shui)

Fiscal reforms carried out following the Revolution of 1911 were the first serious effort to regulate the customary fees by transforming them into a legitimate county tax earmarked in many provinces for the new educational system. All such fees, including those paid with the brokerage license and tax fees, were converted into a public levy called the local public benefit tax (ti-fang kung-i chüan). The taxes paid by legitimate brokers (ya-hang) consisted, then, of a provincial tax (ya-shui), (including license fees and the profit tax) and a county tax (the public benefit tax). Collection of the new local tax remained the responsibility of the merchant guarantors who had formerly been responsible for the levying of the funds for collecting the county tax. Provincial taxes continued, however, to be remitted by the officially licensed brokers themselves, and were not farmed out to private collectors.

Phase 4. The legalization of merchant tax-farming (shang-jen pao-cheng)

The fact that income from the county local public benefit tax consistently exceeded the amount extracted by the provincial government from licenses and brokers' profits ultimately persuaded provincial officials to alter collection procedures by farming out collection of all brokerage license fees and taxes to private merchants in 1925.

The sequence described above by Feng for Ting hsien raises a number of questions about the organization of commercial taxes in Republican China. One question concerns the obvious competition for scarce revenue that engaged both province and county, a contest in which (in this case) the county was the clear victor. Why was the county model of revenue collection finally emulated by the province? And could such a system work on a different scale, for a different level of government administration?
Feng suggests that merchant tax farming worked most efficiently in the brokerage system because the tax had to be collected at dispersed locations throughout each county. County governments had neither the personnel nor the fiscal resources that would have enabled the county to administer tax collection itself at every market level in the exchange system. As it was, licensing procedures focused on higher-level markets where warehousing provided an optimal means of tapping the returns on trade at lower levels. (See Feng 1937, 303)

Further, it can be argued that the scale of county government itself made tax farming (rather than bureaucratic administration of the tax) a workable and desirable system. One reason for this is the possible emergence of a community of shared interests at the local level (official and merchant/gentry types) articulated initially by the collection and payment of the customary fees (lou-kuei). Another reason is the dearth not only of staff but also of coercive power at the county level, where reliance upon a "natural" network rather than an arbitrarily imposed revenue collection system seems clearly preferable.*

*The constituency represented in these local natural networks poses one of the most interesting problems in modern social history. From the viewpoint of the province, any tax system which minimized the participation of county-level bureaucrats and sub-bureaucrats promised to be more lucrative. Feng cites late Hsien-feng memorials that reflect the desire of provincial officials to establish direct collaboration between provincial governments and ya-hang merchants in order to circumvent the county apparatus. The Republican period law succeeded in naming merchants the agents of the provincial revenue office, but stipulated that assignment of tax grades should rest with the county government, and that tax quotas be remitted to the province via the county office. Thus the new provincial pao-shang ordinance was in the end mediated by the relationship between local government and
Historically, collection of commercial taxes began as a provincial responsibility. Twitchett's research suggests that the differentiation of a provincial commercial tax base can be traced to T'ang times and to the creation of a network of chen (garrisons) which he describes as "centres of trade and administrative activity which were dependent directly upon the province, and independent of the established network of county and prefecture." (Twitchett 1966, 240-241) The garrisons provided the coercive sanction for imposing taxes on trade which flowed through these chen, a commercial tax which by Sung times had increased substantially. Kato's account of the modern history of the brokerage tax associates the tax likewise with provincial-level finance. Brokers licensed by the provincial treasurer were found only in higher-level market towns, not in small periodic markets (chi-shih or hsü-shih). (Kato II, 545-49) Below this level an unofficial brokerage network seems to have emerged which grew under the patronage of licensed brokers who farmed out their privileges to subordinates at lower levels of the market system on a percentage basis. In 1916 income from this brokerage tax at the province level totalled 355,674 yuan in Chihli where the largest quota was collected. It was also an important provincial tax in Kirin, Heilungkiang, Shantung, the local trading community. If the government preferred to involve merchants in tax procedures when the gentry were constantly being enjoined from participating in revenue collection, as Philip Kuhn has argued, then we have grounds for reassessing the significance of class and status in this period. For example, there is probably an important distinction to be made between merchants identified as shang and those members of the merchant elite referred to as shen-shang or grouped with the shen (gentry) as a composite elite. These latter moved in gentry circles at the local level, acquiring many of the perquisites of gentry status. They do not appear to be the ones who engaged personally in tax farming.
The increasing importance of the brokerage tax over time reflects the steady enhancement of the extractive capacities of lower-level government organs in 20th century China. Late Ch'ing and Republican legislation began to distinguish central, provincial and local taxes, largely as a result of costly local self-government programs, which required the development of a local tax base. This made it possible to eliminate the Ch'ing convention requiring that all tax income be transmitted to the central Board of Revenue for allocation. This decentralization also required the central government to gradually abandon its efforts to control and regulate trade through monopoly in favor of imposing commercial taxes that were more responsive to local conditions. (Feng 1937, 287)

In so doing, the government redoubled its efforts to constrain the participation of lower gentry in revenue collection (described in Kuhn elsewhere in this volume) by banning issue of brokerage licenses to sheng-yuan and chien-sheng. (Hu Pu Tse Li, cited in Feng 287 n3)

On one level, then, the changing administration of the brokerage tax must be viewed as a function of the contest for revenue between two competing levels of government, the province and the county. It shows that the need for increasing tax revenue by enlarging the non-agricultural tax base gave rise to an increasing delegation of self-assessment functions to local commercial networks, both formal and informal. This decentralization was ultimately determined to be the most efficient strategy for collecting taxes bound for both province and county coffers.

I now turn to a description of some of the local commercial networks the government used in its efforts to build an efficient tax-collecting system. These examples suggest that the government used certain indices of wealth to determine the optimal level at which taxes should be collected in the exchange system, and that the most obvious index was
the construction of permanent places of business. Most of the ya-shui were levied on brokerages that managed warehousing and bulking operations at the wholesale level. Brokerage taxes were collected at lower levels of the exchange system by lesser middlemen who purchased tax-farming privileges from the ya-hang themselves, or from their agents. However the point at which the county and provincial governments negotiated the actual tax quotas tended to be at the level of warehousing and tended to be conducted through transactions with warehousing associations, either guilds or other groups formed specifically as ya-hang licensees; or, in the case of commercial taxes levied on businesses in a single central place, the government chose to tax through the local Chamber of Commerce.

In the account that follows, I shall suggest that differentiation within local merchant or trading groups can be defined in terms of assets in property or capital construction, and group affiliation; that such status differences are reflected in and confirmed by the grades of taxation set forth in the commercial tax codes; and that they are further reflected in the behavior of peasant marketers, who tended to conduct their business with a view to securing reliable sources of credit.

Chambers of Commerce. Evidence from Japanese surveys on the North China Plain in the early 1940s shows that in some counties Chambers of Commerce were administering most local commercial taxes for the central government by that time. Further, by the 1940s, such Chambers could be found not only in county seats, but also in major market towns. In their capacity as organizations representing the collective interest of local businessmen, Chambers of Commerce became logical agencies for tax farming responsibilities. One of the best documented cases is that of Shun-i County, Hopei, which had Chambers of Commerce (Shang-hui) in the county seat and in the two major market towns outside the county seat. These Chambers were delegated formal tax farming duties following the reorganization of the provincial tax laws in 1940. One informant, a member of the staff of the county revenue department, told
Japanese survey teams that it had been customary for the county government to borrow funds from the Chambers on an ad hoc basis to make up shortfalls in the commercial tax remittances. During the year of the survey, "difficulties" encountered by the county magistrate and his aides in assessing each business had led to a request by the county yamen that the Chambers undertake the collection of the commercial tax themselves on a temporary basis.

Under this system, the Chambers collected both a business tax (ying-yeh shui) and an income tax on businessmen. Extra surcharges (t'an-k'uan) to fund security forces, repair bridges, and so forth, were also levied by the Chambers at the request of the county government. In addition a tax to be retained at the local level (as distinguished from the ying-yeh shui, which was remitted to the province) called shang-chu'an (merchant tax) was collected once a year by the Chambers.

What kind of constituency did these Chambers represent? In Shun-i City, most of the members were businesses with a capitalization of over 4,000 yuan, although minimum capital for membership was 500-600. Of the nearly 100 merchant households in the city who were liable for commercial tax payments, members of the Chamber comprised 70-80%. Those 20-30 households who did not enjoy Chamber membership (because, one informant suggested, they could not pay the dues required of members) nonetheless had to remit taxes through the Chamber and were accordingly assessed by the Chamber. These non-members, called "independent merchants" (san-shang), were represented in the assessment deliberations by four or five elected representatives. However they had no formal organization of their own to represent their interests. Informants indicated that the complete monopoly on commercial tax-farming was only recently acquired by the Chamber; that as recently as a year before, non-members of the Chamber had been able to remit directly to the county revenue department.

Clearly this constituency represented by the Chambers of Commerce excluded peddlars and other
hsiao-fan (petty traders) because membership was explicitly limited to those who owned permanent establishments (shang-tien) instead of itinerants or people who frequented periodic markets or the large-scale exchanges (shih-chi) where peasants sold their grain. At the same time, Japanese interviews seem to suggest that most of the commercial taxation, as indicated above, fell on the shoulders of the local merchant elite; petty traders were excluded from tax levies. Of the nine grades established for purposes of assessing taxes, most Chamber members fell into the category of seven or higher. Presumably grades 8-9 were occupied mainly by the independent small businessmen. The Chamber in its corporate role served not only as tax broker but as tax shelter. By guaranteeing the government a tax quota, it made up shortfalls by extending tax credits to those who could not pay. I have seen no estimates of the amount of interest the Chambers collected in their capacity as creditors. It can be argued that it was to their advantage to negotiate quotas high enough to necessitate a regularized credit relationship between some percentage of the membership and the larger organization. That way setting high quotas would become an interest of both the Chamber and the government agency it represented.

The boundaries defining the constituency of the Chambers of Commerce reflect the clear distinction in the eyes of local informants between enterprises with permanent buildings out of which business was transacted, and businesses conducted on the open market on an individual basis by itinerant tradesmen or brokers. Japanese interviewers in Sha-ching Village in Shun-i County found that "stores in the city" (ch'eng-nei shang-tien) were the major source of credit for villagers seeking loans (particularly true in the case of grain businesses), and that while peasants could get a better price for grain by haggling on the open market, the prospect of a reliable source of credit frequently led them to trade regularly with established urban grain brokerages. 8

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Thus we find that both by the government's definition and by the marketing decisions of peasant producers, those merchants with capital to invest in permanent bulking or warehousing operations or those with permanent physical facilities for conducting business occupy a special position. This position is defined mainly in terms of capital concentrated at an identifiable source that changes neither its location nor its management with the season and the regular vicissitudes of the market. This group of propertied entrepreneurs comprised the local merchant elite: the warehousing brokerages with ya-hang licenses at its pinnacle, the membership of the Chamber of Commerce its upper three-quarters, and the independent retailers outside the membership of the Chamber at the bottom. At the local level, this group was creditor to the peasant agricultural sector; at the same time, it acted as creditor to the government, for the Chambers of Commerce frequently made advances to the county government to cover the costs of ad hoc levies for which the t'an-k'uan proved inadequate.

Thus official and private roles combined in creating the complex network of credit and exchange, tax collection and tax farming, that bound government, the merchant community, and local producers in a system of political economy.

Private and public commercial tax farming.

The wide variability in local conditions led to a proliferation of formal structures designed to perform brokerage roles in local trading systems. The county government's procedure for licensing these operations shows that the government chose to "key in" to existing trade networks rather than imposing a uniform system on each locale. The result is a bewildering variety of terms and formal networks or structures, all of which include one wholesaling echelon that operates as primary licensee. As two opposite types, one study (Ch'ü 1933) contrasts the system found in Peking, which was entirely private and decentralized, with that in Tientsin, which was highly centralized and tightly controlled. In the former case, grain traders sold grain to whole-
sale firms (liang-chan) through petty brokers (hsiao ching-chi) who served as "introducers" and "guarantors" of the transaction. These brokers were paid a fee for the issue of official receipts certifying the grain transaction. They in turn paid for their brokerage privilege on a monthly basis by remitting to a head broker (tsung t'ou-mu) who was licensed by the grain firms themselves. The actual brokerage tax was collected for the county revenue office from the brokers by the Grain Wholesalers' Association (Liang-chan-yeh Kung-hui). In this three-tiered mediated system, the government was separated from the actual transaction taxed by three private brokers.

In the Tientsin case, the county directly licensed grain brokerages called tou-tien which performed all mediating functions including facilities for storage, display, and sale of grain; loans and credit, introductions and guarantees. In another case, a grain market at T'ang-kuan-tun in Ching-hai County, Hopei, grain wholesalers joined in joint partnerships comprising several stockholders to solicit licenses from the county government so that they could collect the brokerage tax and thereby win privileged monopolies in the grain trade. This amalgamation of interests seems to represent the culmination of a trend apparent in the 1930s, during which the original brokers, individual chiaoshou, joined to form brokerage companies.

In each of the above examples, monopoly advantage accrued to individuals or firms who were able to affiliate with groups which could negotiate license privileges with the government.

The blurring of the lines between the public and private sectors illustrated in the operation of the brokerage system are cited here as one version of a broader problem facing Western students of modern Chinese society—to wit, the problem of extricating ourselves from normative statements about the criteria for measuring rationality, efficiency, and bureaucratization in the Chinese context. The complications suggested by these examples
provide additional insight into the reasons why many scholars have found Western models unsatisfactory and misleading in the analysis of change in Chinese economic organization.

NOTES

1. An abridged form of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, Chicago, March 31, 1978. For ideas and sources I am greatly indebted to my colleagues in the NEH Modern China Project at the Center for Far Eastern Studies, University of Chicago, especially to Philip Kuhn with whom I began reading about ya-hang, and to David Strand, Guy Alitto, Joseph Fewsmith, Chiang Yung-chen, Winston Hsieh, and Angela Zito. I also wish to thank Robert Kapp and David Buck for their suggestions.

2. A preliminary survey of Shantung and Hopei gazetteers provides some indication of the importance of ya-shui in county-level budgets. The most significant percentage I have seen is in Shun-i County (Hopei) in 1932. Of a total 67,697,568 yuan budgeted for local expenses, 21,599 (c. 33%) came from surcharges on the land tax; 14,679.6 (c. 20%) came from surcharges on ya-hang transactions. This figure also excludes other brokerage taxes on grain, poultry, and slaughtering which would have increased the percentage formed by ya-shui. (Shun-i hsien chih 1932, 6:19b-20a) Ya-shui was more important in the revenue of Hopei Province than elsewhere in China. Chu Hsieh (1935, p. 181) cites the following figures [note that the Hopei data exclude Pe-king, which forms a discrete fiscal unit; figures are c. 1932]:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Amount (yuan)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hopei</td>
<td>2,726,259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honan</td>
<td>611,424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiangsu</td>
<td>462,240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shantung</td>
<td>330,285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fukien</td>
<td>270,816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chekiang</td>
<td>261,360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peking</td>
<td>173,385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anhwei</td>
<td>145,148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hupeh</td>
<td>96,351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunan</td>
<td>60,768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiangsi</td>
<td>36,980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suiyuan</td>
<td>4,171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanking</td>
<td>2,636</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

95
The Hopei data above exclude Peking, which formed a discrete fiscal unit. Kwangtung and Kwangsi are absent from the list because there was no brokerage tax called *ya-shui* collected in those provinces. However, there were taxes on transactions in certain commodities which were in fact brokerage taxes. My assumption is that this difference reflects important differences in the organization of trade, a hypothesis that awaits testing.

3. Similar laws were passed in Kiangsu Province at about the same time. See *Chiang-su Sheng chien*, chapter 4 (Ts'ai-cheng) topic 5 (Ya-shui) section 3, pp. 223-226.

4. Much of the data that follows was compiled by Feng while studying the brokerage tax in Hopei Province as a member of the Nankai University research effort of the 1930s. Feng's source was a 1934 survey of land tax and property tax in Ting hsien conducted by Chang Ch'un-ming. I am grateful to Guy Alitto for providing me with a copy of this article.

5. The best review of the premises on which Ch'ing commercial policy was based is Thomas A. Metzger, "The state and commerce in imperial China." *Asian and African Studies* 6 (1970), 23-46.

6. See *Kuang-tung t'ung-chih* (1535) 18:20a-b; and *Ch'ang-shan hsien chih* 1803, shih-chi section 1: 31b-32. My thanks to James Lee for picking the Kwangtung example out of his reading.

7. These questions and some answers arose in the course of conversations with David Strand, to whom I owe a great deal of my thinking on the subject.

8. One exchange went something like this: "Grain is sold on the open market (*shih*), and never to an established brokerage firm, unless you need a loan. On the market you can sell it to whomever offers
the highest price." Q: "Then does it involve a loss to deal with the grain brokerages (tien)?"
A: "Well, on the market you can choose your buyer but in a grain brokerage you go there because you can trust the owner. Most of the time, poor people sell to grain brokerages; people go there who still owe payments on their loans." See Chūgoku nōson II:195a.

9. Marketing transactions were not the only occasions for creating credit relationships between villagers and urban merchant creditors. In the Sha-ching Village study, Japanese interviewers found that a store favored by villagers for credit was owned by a villager and employed three of the sons of a wealthy resident of the village. Another means of establishing credit relationships with urban businesses was to secure the personal guarantee of the village headman. The latter's widespread personal acquaintances in the county seat were considered one of his most important assets, as he could tap a considerable range of personal contacts to secure assistance for a villager requesting aid. See Chūgoku nōson II:219, 230.

10. Data for the Sha-ching Village study cited here may be found in Chūgoku nōson II:194-5, 218-19, 230.

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Two basic features of China's modernization process emerged into the Republican period as an outgrowth of Ch'ing conditions: (1) the extension of bureaucratic administration to smaller-scale units of organization, and (2) increased participation by local people in the formal apparatus of community government. Both these processes suggest the essential ambiguity of the Republican experience in local government: new political forms began as solutions to problems of the late empires, but grew over into aspects of the developing nation-state. To illustrate the nature of this ambiguity, I shall discuss the development of local taxation and finance.

Networks and territories in local administration. China's local administrative system can be visualized as operating in the two complementary modes of network and territory. The way these modes interact in any particular system is one way in which that system can be characterized. By network I mean a complex of social units which reflects social relationships or community functions. Though such a human infrastructure extends over an identifiable space, it is not defined primarily in spatial terms, but rather in terms of its internal social functions. Examples are a market town and its dependent villages; a ramified local lineage; or a multi-community defense league. In one of its modes, local administration is an interaction between a center of authority and the networks of local society. Territory, by contrast, is not defined by its internal social topography, but by some function of local government. The simplest example in the Chinese case is the tax assessment area called t'u: a piece of land with known boundaries, which in Ch'ing times formed the basis for land-tax assess-
ment. Its description in official documents seldom makes reference to human networks of any sort, though obviously many kinds of network exist within it. Another example is the county (hsien), an outgrowth of historical tradition and geography, but defined in practice as an area of jurisdiction for an externally-appointed bureaucrat.

One way in which territory and network interact in local administration is through mutual definition. Networks come to define the territories with which they are associated, and vice-versa. In a revenue system, the way in which networks define territories seems to be historically associated with the existence of a higher political entity: a state authority which invests a network with the power and responsibility of providing a certain quota of revenue from the area it controls. In a settled farming society, where the map is completely filled by human habitation and agriculture, the territories of such politically-empowered networks will tend to be mutually delimiting. An example may be found in the local administrative system of northern India in Mughal times. There the basic unit of revenue administration was the pargana, a roughly county-sized unit that was the territorial expression of a relationship between the Mughal authorities and the dominant Rajput lineage in that region. The territory of a pargana was simply the area in which the ruler of such a stratified lineage could effectively garner the agricultural surplus. The lineage head would, so to speak, sub-infeudate leaders of junior lineage units (the "village zamindars") to collect taxes in the villages and multi-village groupings. Thus, although taxing territories were bounded (in the sense that everyone knew which piece of land belonged within each unit), what defined the ground was the reach of the dominant lineage. ² Note that such a revenue system does not require the existence of cadastral survey techniques: quotas may be negotiated or purely customary rather than based on a standard measure of land of known productivity. Revenue systems such
as this one, in which a central power secures a share of the agricultural surplus through indigenous strongmen, operating in a stratified pattern of authority and mutual obligation, suggest "feudal" rather than "bureaucratic" organization.

Can territories also define networks? Under certain circumstances territorial divisions can be imposed upon local society with no initial regard for the social infrastructure within. This can happen where cadastral measurement enables the state to compile land registers, which are then used to fix revenue quotas for areas of known extent and productivity, as in the case of the Chinese t'u.

A system of local administration based on customary or imposed territorial units may have important effects on state structure. Since the state can only govern a territory through human agency, it follows that it must fix authority and responsibility within the territory in some formal and predictable manner. One expedient is bureaucratic management: the imposition of a center of authority from outside, with strong ties to the superior state apparatus but weak ties to the territory it is governing. In such a situation, the state in effect leaves the official with the task of forming his own working relationships with the elites of indigenous networks.

Another expedient is to fix authority and responsibility upon the elite of a particular indigenous network, thus legitimizing its authority within the boundaries of the defined territory. This process would have far-reaching effects on the social structure within the territory, effects that would vary with scale. In a large territory, with many competing networks, those which became the agents of state power would gain eminence and influence relative to competitors. In a small territory, the effect might be to heighten the power gradient within particular networks, as, for example, the authority of an officially patronized elite of a kinship group is strengthened over lower strata in its own network.
Another resolution, particularly relevant to the Chinese case, is the establishment of artificial networks. Here I refer to the decimal aggregates of households, as in the pao-chia or li-chia systems, typical of Chinese administrative practice. The grouping of households in tens, hundreds, and thousands, each level furnishing its own headman, can best be understood as a state response to a situation in which indigenous networks are too weak to be relied upon as instruments of state authority, or in which indigenous networks are precisely the entities which the state would rather have remain weak, and upon which the state is reluctant to confer any added authority or legitimacy. The relative weakness of indigenous networks in the revenue system of Ming and Ch'ing times, and the hostile state attitude toward the emergence of strong local networks in revenue administration, is particularly striking in contrast with the Indian case just mentioned.

The evolution of the Ming-Ch'ing revenue system. The revenue system of the early Ming, spanning the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century, relied upon two complementary institutions: the "grain-tax administrators" (liang-chang), and the li-chia system. These were differentiated by their functions and their social bases. Li-chia was based upon a 110-household group, of which the ten largest households (best supplied with male adult labor power) performed in rotation various local services such as tax-collection, the mobilization of corvée labor, and transmitting government orders. The responsible households were, at least at the outset, probably of rich peasant or small landlord status: households with enough male adults and productive power to be able to bear the burdens of the job.

Grain-tax administrators, however, were really substantial landlords whom the Ming founder hoped to turn into a stratum of indigenous sub-officials. Their job was to collect grain taxes within the territory allotted to them (the grain-
tax territory or liang-ch'ü), and transport them to administrative cities. The grain-tax territories were laid out according to the amounts of tax revenue they would produce. Initially, the prestige of such posts was high. They actually represented a channel of advancement into regular official careers, following a recruitment pattern that had existed in Chin and Yuan times. The posts tended to become hereditary and to accrete various other forms of local authority.

The decline of both the li-chia and liang-chang systems was related to general economic and social trends of the Ming period. The increasing monetization and commercialization of the economy and the substitution of paid for conscripted labor culminated during the 16th and 17th centuries in the long series of tax reforms known as the single-whip (i-t'iao pien-fa), in which labor exactions were commuted to money payments and then merged with the land tax. Since land was gradually becoming the universal referent for tax assessment, the li itself was identified, in practice, as an area of taxable land rather than an aggregate of labor liable households. The incompatibility of the household-aggregate li with the territorial li was evident when the government attempted to make li-chia headmen responsible for the full payment of taxes from given areas of taxable land. The ebb and flow of actual land ownership led in some areas to a high degree of absentee landlordism and consequent inequality of taxable wealth among li and among their component subunits, the chia. Exemptions granted degree-holders and officials led to tax-evasion dodges such as "commendation" (t'ou-k'ao) and "secret trusteeship" (kuei-chi), which further tipped the balance of tax obligation against those least able to pay. The lowly li-chia headmen had no way to make up the resulting deficits or to enforce government demands upon powerful landowners. Thus the artificial networks of li-chia had become irrelevant to the real social system of the late Ming.

As for the grain-tax administrators, it was
evident from the early years of the system that the attempt to create revenue networks of really powerful local figures was doomed. Ironically, it was the ingrained antipathy of the Chinese bureaucratic state toward indigenous local satrapies that proved the system's undoing. Objections to the unchecked arrogance of hereditary administrators led the government to diminish their privileges and raise their obligations. No longer was the post treated as a route to regular official status. At the same time, the lure of the regular examination system as a route to power and prestige proved stronger than the attraction of the increasingly circumscribed local tax posts. The declining prestige of these posts, and the declining social status of those who could be induced to fill them, was reflected in a reduction in size of the areas of tax-collection responsibility (liang-ch'ü), which were sometimes simply merged with the li of the li-chia system. Absentee landlordism and tax evasion had the same effects upon the liang-ch'ü as upon the li-chia territories: the accumulation of land by those who could not be compelled to pay left the administrators responsible for amounts they could not collect. Here, as in the li-chia system, economic and social change made it impossible to base an effective revenue system upon networks such as li-chia and the liang-chang.

A palliative measure undertaken from late Ming times was the attempt to equalize the tax liabilities of territories so that indigenous collectors could bear the burdens. This was the system variously called "equal chia" (chūn-chia), "equal mou" (chūn-mou), or "equal field, equal service" (chūn-t'ien, chūn-i), first instituted in the Kiangnan region in the late 1660s and 1670s. The method was to fix the sizes of territorial units in terms of taxable acreage. The effort was not only to make taxable areas commensurate with the headmen's capacity to urge and guarantee tax-payment, but--even more important from the state's viewpoint--to prevent such tax-evasion tricks as the fraudulent registration of land under the name
of influential persons in another li or chia. By the time this system began to operate, li itself had already become a purely territorial designation—a bounded area of taxable land—and was generally known as t'u. Sizes varied, but a common scale was about 500 acres (3,000 mou). Though in some areas headmen were apparently still appointed over such territorial units, they were no longer identified with decimal aggregates, nor were they in a position, by virtue of wealth or status, to guarantee tax payments within the t'u. Thus li-chia as a system of artificial networks was already moribund by mid-Ch'ing times.

In the context of late Ming—early Ch'ing society, however, with its free-wheeling market in land and its concentration of ownership in non-resident hands, such a territorial equalization system can only be termed utopian. For one thing, investment in land by urban rentiers commonly meant buying little parcels here and there, rather than huge estates in a single area, a fact which completely vitiated the economic assumptions behind the equal-chia system. For another thing, only the most incorruptible and meticulous record-keeping could have kept track of changing ownership, thus making it possible to keep track of tax liability. Consequently, by K'ang-hsi times all the old evils of unequal tax burdens had re-emerged in the now supposedly "equal chia."4

The "equal chia" system was the last effort to deal with revenue collection in terms of the old vision of an agricultural society in which land ownership and human settlements could be assumed to exist in a stable relationship. By the 1720s, the moribund li-chia system was done away with, in all but name, by the introduction of a system in which registers would be based upon taxpayers' place of residence. This was the system known as shun-chuang—chuang being essentially a bookkeeping unit representing the tax-liability of either a natural settlement (an urban ward or rural village) or an administrative village. Beside the name of every taxpayer would be listed
all the land he owned, in whatever t'u. The t'u, as territorial assessment units, remained on the maps, presumably for the guidance of the county tax office (the elaborate charts of t'u, chia, and analogous units found in Ch'ing gazetteers must be understood as serving only this purpose). Indeed, it is clear that the shun-chuang method represents the ultimate centralization of revenue management in the county offices, since only functionaries with countywide records could keep track of which households were liable for taxation on widely-scattered plots of lands that crossed t'u boundaries.\(^5\)

How shall we then characterize the land-tax system as it existed by late Ch'ing times? Ideally, the taxing process involved a direct relationship between individual households and state authorities. Neighbors would pass "rolling registers" (kun-tan) among themselves to keep everyone informed about what he owned, then each household individually was to come to the tax-collection station (kuei) of the county tax office (or its local branch) and pay up.\(^6\) The prescribed system, as pictured in late Ch'ing documents, is thus surprisingly atomized: there is to be no intermediary between individual households and the state, no corporate groups with collective tax responsibility, no intermediate networks with revenue collecting functions. The disintegration of the li-chia and the liang-chang systems under the economic pressures of late imperial society had, it appears, left an administrative vacuum in the most important governmental function that touched local communities.

One way of viewing the role of landlords, of course, is that they were, in effect, functioning as revenue agents of the state: collecting rents from tenants and forwarding a portion of them to the county office as taxes. Indeed, the collaboration between county bureaucrats and landlords in enforcing payment of rents, a practice which emerges most prominently during the late nineteenth century, could be characterized as a de
facto co-optation of landlords into the revenue system. Nevertheless I have some doubt that this kind of de facto landlord-taxation system can be seen in more than a few areas of especially high tenancy; and the state's hostile attitude toward landlords' involvement in the tax system, which is discussed below, makes this analysis all the less plausible.

The commercial-managerial system. It is tempting to assume that revenue collection had been effectively bureaucratized, with a staff of tax-clerks in the county offices keeping accurate registers and individual households meeting their obligations accordingly. However, this was certainly not the case. Instead of bureaucratization, what actually happened is better described as commercialization. Tax collection became a regular business, in which the clerks and runners became, in effect, entrepreneurs dealing in usury and tax-farming. The usury business involved the tax-runners' (liang-ch'ai) advancing tax payments (tien-na) on behalf of tax-liable households, then collecting later with interest at 100% or more. Strong-arm methods of collection were readily available: loan defaulters could be arrested and locked up through regular county police procedures. Regularized tax-farming (pao-chou) by county clerks seems to have been a recognized and indeed essential collection procedure in many areas. Clerks would obtain tax-farming franchises from county magistrates by the payment of large bribes—which, since rates and occasions were institutionalized, can be considered a form of capital investment with a relatively predictable rate of return. By late Ch'ing times, the tax-farming system, as described in various sections of the Ts'ai-cheng shuo-ming shu, seems to have been quite capitalist: a private business that had grown up within the bureaucratic structure of county administration. To this sort of powerfully organized clerkly capitalism, the households in the rural villages were extremely vulnerable, since they were unprotected by any form of intermediate organization.
In the absence of a stratum of local leadership powerful and wealthy enough to protect the villages against the depredations of tax-clerks, some communities resorted to various forms of collective insurance. This took the form of choosing a commoner representative to deal with the tax clerks and providing him with funds to pay the necessary bribes and make up deficits for the community. Financial back-up came from special local assessments or the income from land endowments. Such systems of collective management were variously called "cooperative t'u" (hsieh-t'u), "headman-fields" (t'ou-jen t'ien) or, more generally, "voluntarist t'u" (i-t'u). The "voluntarism" idea expressed the spontaneous efforts by local people to bring about full and prompt tax payments through their own representatives and thereby fend off the predatory underlings of the county yamen (or at least buy them off collectively). Officials actually favored this form of spontaneous community fiscal defense as a way of facilitating tax collection and avoiding deficits. How well did it work? Generally, its success seems to have depended on how well the system was able to bolster the financial security and community status of its headmen. At its best, it seems to have formed a workable local network that could both protect the community and satisfy official tax demands. At its worst, however, it degenerated into a pale version of the old li-chia, in which headmen in rotational service had insufficient resources to do either. An account of how i-t'u supposedly functioned in the grain-tribute system during the late 19th century shows a county simply overrun by predacious yamen functionaries. In this particular case, the difficulty may have been compounded by the fact that the local elite was highly urbanized and had, in effect, insufficient motive to promote rural networks in the tax system.  

The "voluntarist t'u" system had an interesting counterpart in the commercial sector in the form of "voluntarist markets" (i-chi). Here it was a matter of local merchant networks cooperating to
fend off the exactions of the licensed brokers (ya-hang or ching-chi) who collected miscellaneous excise taxes on the government's behalf, by banding together to pay the taxes themselves. Such groups made valiant efforts to secure what were, in effect, free markets. This seems to have been a losing battle during mid-Ch'ing times, as the ya-hang system gradually spread to more market towns.\textsuperscript{10}

\textbf{The role of the gentry.} What was the position of the local elite in this commercial tax system? Much has been written about "gentry society" as the form of officially sanctioned sub-county rule by local degree-holders in the absence of effective bureaucratic control below the hsien. There is indeed plenty of evidence that local elite formed the organizing networks for local charity, education, small-scale water conservancy, and defense. Nevertheless, there is considerable doubt that the concept of "gentry society" can be extended to the most important governmental activity in county life: the management of the revenue system. Gentry involvement in local tax collection increased steeply after the middle of the nineteenth century, but even in the last decades of imperial rule, the government was still able, to a surprising degree, to keep the gentry away from the land-tax, the mainstay of public finance. There are, I believe, two principal reasons for this: first, longstanding government efforts to prevent the emergence of strong intermediate networks in the tax system; and second, a marked ambivalence among the local elite toward involvement in formal administrative activities on the sub-county level.

To take government policy first, it has already been remarked that the Ming bureaucratic state contributed to the destruction of the liang-chang system, which the Hung-wu Emperor had created. The Ch'ing government was equally vigilant lest local elites move into the administrative vacuum caused by the disintegration of the liang-chang and li-chia systems. A Chekiang magistrate's re-
Port of around 1721 illustrates the continuing vigilance on the part of officialdom: recent tax shortages were the result, not of default among the people, but of interference by "gentry rascals" who arrogated to themselves the title of t'u-head (t'ou-t'ou), resisted the yamen runners, and collected tax themselves—turning over to the government only a fraction of the quota. This was of course the constantly prohibited practice of pao-lan (proxy remittance, or engrossment of taxes). Pao-lan crops up so often in Ch'ing documents that it was obviously a rampant abuse. Yet the fact that prohibitions against it were written into the Ch'ing penal code and strict penalties imposed means that the local elite could never have achieved (until the late nineteenth century, when many such prohibitions were falling by the wayside) as secure and legitimate place within the tax system, as in other spheres of local activity. To judge from the tone of official pronouncements, the Ch'ing state was determined to protect its revenue by keeping tax collection a matter between the county yamen and the individual taxpayer.

One difficulty of enforcing the prohibition against gentry involvement in tax collection was that some magistrates had actually been known to promote it. Fearful of the effects of tax shortfalls upon their merit ratings, some magistrates illegally compelled local gentry to undertake tax-farming, an admission that the absence of strong sub-county networks made tax-collection difficult. Such compulsory tax-farming also occurred on a lower scale: yamen runners were known to compel rich households to pay the full tax obligation of their kinsmen or neighbors, from whom they would then have the job of collecting later. Only a stiff bribe to the runners would release them from this obligation—and refusal would lead to their indictment for interfering with public business. In one late Ch'ing case, county authorities in Kiangsu were accused of forcing local people to assume the post of chia-head (chia-chang) then forcing them to pay taxes on behalf of others—again, obviously

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for the purpose of filling quotas promptly. An investigation purported to find the accusations groundless, but an edict subsequently ordered that the post of chia-chang be permanently abolished, just in case.13

It is not surprising that, under the threat of becoming involved in nasty proceedings with unsavory people, to say nothing of dangerous penal liability, local gentry were at least ambivalent about becoming involved in local administration, particularly tax administration. Naturally, no rich household wanted to be stuck with responsibility for its neighbors' default, and it must have taken nerves of steel to become extensively involved in the pao-lan business. Even when "requested" by officials to help with tax-prompting and collection, gentry would plead that such duties "were not within their proper sphere" (fei ch'i fen-nei).14

The reluctance of "upright" gentry to become involved in tax business was reflected in a pervasive official view that only "crafty" or "evil" gentry would become involved in public affairs of this sort. "Those who are active are not good, and those who are good are not active" (wei-che pu-shan, shan-che pu-wei).15 An early twentieth-century description of tax-farming by local defense chiefs (t'uan-tsung) in Kwangsi, a practice which had become institutionalized by the last decades of the dynasty, warns that, although it might be supposed that "using men in place of dogs" (i.e. gentry in place of clerks for tax-farming) would be a step forward, yet the tradition in Kwangsi was that "respectable gentry do not enter the public gate" (do not involve themselves in formal responsibility for local administration), and that those who did so were mostly power-hungry rascals.16

Information of this sort leads me to doubt that the general separation of gentry from the land-tax system was solely a result of government prohibitions against pao-lan. There was enough aversion to the degrading personal connections and general ma-fan associated with tax-collection to keep most gentry strictly away from the administra-
A happier strategy was to strike the best possible bargain—or concoct the best subterfuge—with respect to one's own tax liability: a strategy that would not lead the gentry to form sub-county networks of revenue management, save under extreme conditions.

It is difficult to assess how far local gentry interests actually got away with flouting the official prohibition against pao-lan in Ch'ing times. Most of the data on "abuses" come to us as records of government prosecution. Such data obviously show that the abuses were occurring, and that they were being prosecuted. They fail to indicate (save sometimes by indirection) how often such practices went undetected or unprosecuted. So we are left with a descriptive problem: is the cup half empty, or half full? Which is more significant: that the local elite exhibited a continuous tendency to form their own local networks within the revenue system; or that the government exerted a continuous pressure to break up such networks and keep the revenue system under bureaucratic control? I will suggest later that it really did make a difference that there was an adversary relationship between the bureaucracy and local elite networks, and that the involvement of the elite in land-tax collection was never really legitimated by the bureaucratic state.

New channels for participation in local government. Studies of nineteenth-century history, including my own work, have stressed the effect of mid-century militarization upon elite involvement in local administration. New research is now suggesting that in some areas the pace of this involvement may have been accelerated earlier, in the course of conflicts over the revenue system during the late Chia-ch'ing and early Tao-kuang periods, and that the local power-struggles of that era grew over, in the context of local militarization, into the heightened gentry involvement of the mid and late nineteenth century. James Polachek's work on Kiangnan tax cases of the 1820s, as they were
revealed in the numerous "metropolitan appeals" (ching-k'ung) of that era, suggests that local gentry may have been moving into the revenue system as a way of coping with heightened illegal exactions by county clerks in the grain-tribute system.

The case of Yu Hsien-keng, a sheng-yuan of Chu-jung, Kiangsu, illustrates the defensive nature of such involvement. Yu was a landowner, probably of small or medium wealth, who in 1822 championed the cause of numerous compatriots who were being victimized by granary clerks. These clerks were levying no fewer than ten varieties of illegal "fees" in the process of tribute-grain collection. Yu not only sent an appeal (ching-k'ung) to Peking through the censorate, but even went so far as to organize his own county-wide local network to intervene in the taxing system. This network, complete with a printed booklet of local regulations (hsiang-kuei), was evidently designed to marshall support among landowners and the heads of li-chia t'u divisions for resisting the clerks and bringing pressure upon the magistrate. To finance the printing of the regulations and (ostensibly) to rebuild the county granary, Yu and his associates induced the li-chia headmen to levy surtaxes upon county taxpayers, based on grain-tribute assessments (an-mi p'ai-chuan). Yu's local support must have been considerable; at some point the magistrate was persuaded to issue prohibitions against the clerkly fees, prohibitions which were forthwith engraved on stone tablets and subscribed with the names of 74 members of the local landowning elite. Unfortunately for Yu, the appeal to Peking was referred back to the provincial governor, who was apparently suborned by Yu's local enemies. Convicted of concocting a false appeal, as well as of illegally levying surtaxes and "improperly meddling in local public affairs" (chia-t'o ti-fang kung-shih), Yu was banished to Sinkiang. The fate of this "bad gentry" (lieh-chin) suggests how difficult it was to challenge the clerkly-managerial system by appeal to higher authority. It also foreshadows the
key role of surtaxes (as distinct from the basic land-tax itself) as a channel for gentry involvement in local government later in the century.\(^{17}\)

That the Chü-jung case was no anomaly, but an early example of a much larger movement, is suggested by the large number of "tax-resistance" cases of the 1840s and 1850s. These, too, exhibited much involvement by the lower elite and seem commonly to have been sparked by the illegal exactions of tax-clerks.

What seemed to provincial authorities "improper meddling in local public affairs" in the 1820s, however, had become commonplace by the 1850s. The terms in which official documents describe Yü Hsien-keng's local network-building closely resemble descriptions of how local elite mobilized county resources for local defense against the Taipings thirty years later—with the exception of the opprobrious conclusions! It is significant, too, that even during the latter half of the nineteenth century, the gentry's involvement in local taxation grew up largely outside the sphere of the land-tax itself. It occurred through the surtaxes (fu-chia-shui) and miscellaneous excises (tsa-chllan) that became the mainstay of local and provincial militarization during the unstable decades after 1850.

There was a clear distinction in financial practice between surtaxes and miscellaneous excises. Surtaxes were levied on the basis of land-tax assessments, and their administration tended to remain more closely under provincial government control. Miscellaneous excises were similar to the likin in that both were aimed at the commercial sector. Because of their basically uncontrollable nature, excises were readily adapted to the growing involvement of local-level elites in the formal business of county government. The beginnings of legitimate gentry involvement in the tax system, however, came with the surtaxes imposed during the Taiping Rebellion.

Surtaxes had been part of the Ch'ing fiscal scene since the early eighteenth century: the huo-hao or "meltage" fees, legitimimized in 1724, and
the p'ing-yü (surcharge) in 1738, were designed for expenses of local government that could not be met from the inelastic land-tax. The novelty of the mid-nineteenth century surtaxes, however, was that although they were based on land-tax assessments, they were actually collected by gentry-staffed bureaus. The politics behind this institution are still unknown, but it is possible that it represents a compromise—under the duress of rebellion—with local landowners to keep the surcharges out of the hands of the clerks. Because half the tax was to be forwarded to the provincial treasury in advance of the taxing season, thus forcing the local elite into the tax-farming business (advancing the funds—tien-na—and then collecting later), the gentry-run bureau was the only practical collection agency.18

Among the motives for gentry involvement in the collection bureaus was certainly the emoluments (lao-chin) that came out of the authorized collection expenses (which ranged up to three percent of the total take). Beginning in 1902, however, some of these surtaxes were earmarked for the use of "modernization" activities (hsin-cheng) on the county level, in which local gentry were increasingly involved.

Even in this era of fiscal disintegration, however, the central government was concerned to protect its hegemony over the basic land-tax itself, the foundation of its revenue. An edict of 1879 cashiered certain Szechwan "bureau gentry" (chü-shen) who, while collecting the authorized surtaxes, had actually meddled in the land-tax administration itself (probably by advancing payment and demanding interest). The land-tax was still considered firmly outside the "proper sphere" (pen-fen) of the local elite.19

While the state seems to have been largely successful in its efforts to keep the local elite from forming an intermediate stratum in the land-tax system, the miscellaneous excises formed a natural and convenient channel for increasing gentry participation in formal, legitimate functions of
local finance. These excises, like the more famous likin tax which they closely resembled, became a major burden upon the populace. The impetus for the excises was the modernization program begun by the Ch'ing government during the first decade of the twentieth century. Modern schools and police forces were the most expensive features of the hsin-cheng (modernized government) movement. Gentry management of such modernizing enterprises was legitimized through the official constitutionalist movement which, in 1908, institutionalized the beginnings of "local self government," an idea borrowed from Japan which had been popular among reformists since 1898.20

The theoretical basis for local taxation, which tended to justify extensive participation by local elite in the financing of county services, began to emerge only in 1908. In that year, the Constitution Drafting Office (Hsien-cheng pien-ch'a kuan) called for preparation of comprehensive regulations that would delimit the proper spheres of central and local taxation. Regulations issued the following year for "self-government" of municipalities, towns, and rural townships (ch'eng, chen, hsiang) spelled out categories of revenue for local self-government which included all the customary gentry-managed local funds, plus additional surtaxes, miscellaneous excises, and punitive fines. In 1909, the Financial Reorganization Bureaus (Ch'ing-li ts'ai-cheng chu) of provincial governments began to compile the massive surveys of provincial taxation called Ts'ai-cheng shuo- ming-shu, by order of the Ministry of Finance. In these volumes the different tax bases of local, provincial, and national finance were laid out, for the first time, in minute detail. Much of the financial devolution that had been occurring since the nineteenth century was now spelled out in systematic form, along with extensive theoretical discussions of the division between local and national taxes. Further refinement of the local-national tax division was laid out in 1913 and 1914 in regulations issued by the Ministry of Finance.21
Material in the Ts'ai-cheng shuo-ming-shu shows that local county elites had already been accorded significant local taxing and disbursement powers through the miscellaneous excises. In Shan-si, for example, county elites were regularly financing new-style schools and police through a wide range of local excises (including levies on shops, donkey-cart traffic, theatrical performances, and charcoal kilns, among others). Such taxes are typically characterized as "managed by gentry, and not passing through official hands" (shen-shih ching-li, pu-ching kuan-shou). The wider range of gentry financial participation is indicated by the transition in school financing from rent or interest on capital to regular annual taxation, an inevitable change that accompanied the more expensive modern schooling. Taxes of this kind (along with a number of provincial taxes) are listed in the category of "outside accounts" (wai-hsiao—not reported to the Ministry of Finance).22

Beside facilitating a broader participation by local elite in the taxing process. "local self-government" legitimized the finer infrastructure of sub-county administration that had been growing up since the mid-nineteenth century. A revealing memorial from the Ministry of Finance in 1907 notes that, according to the Ch'ing statutes, the heads of pao-chia, li-chia, and hsiang-yueh units are the only officially recognized formal functionaries in local society. Nevertheless, since Hsien-feng and T'ung-chih times, the business of local government has increased so much that "in raising funds for local defense, providing expenses for military needs, and rooting out traitors, magistrates have had no alternative but to rely on the strength of local voluntary associations" (hsiang-she—meaning the informal networks of the county elite). The memorial goes on to note the multifarious forms that local leadership assumed as it gradually took over formal functions of sub-county government, on scales ranging from a single village to several tens of villages (or in remote counties, ranging over territories of over 100 li in extent).23

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The financial powers of such local headmen, existing at first on the margins of the regular tax system, expanded into the realm of surtaxes and excises as the nineteenth century progressed and were finally legitimized through the hsin-cheng and local self-government programs of the early twentieth century. Thus sub-county networks with real (and for the moment, legitimate) political and financial power began to fill the vacuum left by the disintegration of the li-chia and liang-chang systems.

Such networks might form around the vestigial territorial units that remained on the books from earlier times. In Shun-i, for example, a county near Peking, new "general managers" (tsung-tung) were appointed in 1903 for the ten territorial units (lu) which had once served as upper-level links in both the li-chia and pao-chia systems. The managers were given the formal power to raise education funds and to manage a varied set of local activities. These were local landlords who carried on their managerial jobs under the patronage of the gentry living in the county seat. The territories over which they presided later became the basis for the wards (ch'u), the ubiquitous sub-county territories of the Republican period.24

Despite considerable official suspicion over the form in which it was emerging, finer local infrastructure below county level was perceived in some official circles as a necessity. In the early 1850s, for example, a beleaguered magistrate in southern Hunan, lamenting the vacuum in local control, proposed that the moribund pao-chia system be made an effective local network by granting its headmen brevet official ranks (ting-tai) which would in effect transform them into a kind of local sub-official (the proposal was rejected by provincial authorities).25 Other writers, most notably Feng Kuei-fen, Huang Tsun-hsien, and K'ang Yu-wei, were also concerned with the inadequacy of sub-county administrative networks: and proposed to deal with them by formalizing and mobilizing the
power of existing local elites. By the twentieth century, provincial authorities were already seeing the local self-government movement as a possible vehicle for reforming tax administration. Some financial officials saw gentry self-government managers as appropriate agents for undertaking a new cadastral survey.

Generally, however, there was considerable caution in provincial attitudes toward local elite activism on the county level and below. The Ministry of Finance memorial of 1907 warned that, although local elites were already assuming formal responsibility for dispute resolution, police, and local fund-raising, it was questionable whether such local managers could safely be relied upon in such sensitive areas as land-tax collection and local militia. The memorialists proposed a thorough nationwide investigation of the local managerial system before it was made the basis for a constitutional form of local self-government. Authorities in Chihli recognized the need for a tax-collection infrastructure that would be completely controllable by official regulations, but considered neither the nascent self-government system, nor the existing system of yamen clerks and runners, to be suitable vehicles for a modernized tax system. Provincial authorities were looking for a finer infrastructure of administration, but one which was thoroughly bureaucratized.

Efforts to re-bureaucratize financial administration. One result of the proliferation of surtaxes and excises was that county government, and the elite-led modernization efforts that surrounded it, were afforded a financial base that they had previously lacked. The price, however, was virtual chaos in county finances. Since so many hsin-cheng enterprises were set up outside the regular structure of county government, their finances were separately managed: each sector (police, education, etc.) would actually collect its own taxes and disburse its own funds. This "special fund" (chuan-k'uan) system could not have existed without the patronage of
county government; yet county government was ill-prepared to control it. Around the time of the Revolution of 1911, many local gentry-led activities of both the traditional and modern sorts, established "custodial committees" (pao-kuan wei-yuan-hui), each of which maintained a grip upon its particular sector of public finance. In the early years of the Republic, some of these functions were brought together in county organizations called "public fund offices" (kung-k'uan-so). These were in the category of "official supervision and citizen [i.e., gentry and merchant] management" (kuan-tu min-pan); they neither came fully under official control, nor managed to centralize all taxing functions.

Only the broadened participation of the local elite in the formal structure of local government, along with the proliferation of sub-county administrative units, made possible the broadened base of county finance during the early Republic. Ironically, it was this fact that made county finance so hard for the bureaucracy to control. It might be supposed that, by this time, the state's opposition to local elite involvement in taxation was occasioned by the needs of nation-building: the need for better economic planning and mobilization of resources. Actually, opposition came as much from provincial as from national agencies, and rested on rather traditional assumptions about the prerogatives of the bureaucratic state in the realm of taxation. It is surprising how quickly these state prerogatives were reasserted during the period immediately following the 1911 Revolution. By the end of the Yuan Shih-k'ai era, the state had already made substantial inroads against elite taxing power at the county level by dissolving the "self-government" assemblies and abrogating their legal powers to levy various kinds of local imposts.

Efforts to regain control over county-level finance continued under the warlord governments, but the effect of such efforts remains to be determined province by province. Keith Schoppa's study
of Chekiang pictures a standoff between state power and a resurgent local elite. Generally it appears that the administrative history of local finance during this interlude took place in a context of changing relations between county and province. These relations were, in some respects, highly competitive. The prevailing trend was really a continuation of late Ch'ing developments: the increasing dominance of the province over other levels of administration, a trend that seems to have continued under the Nanking regime.

After the land-tax was formally relegated to the provinces and classed as "local" rather than "national" tax (ti-fang-shui) after 1928, the main lines of competition developed naturally between provincial administrators and the welter of local interests (including county governments) which divided up tax revenues at the county level. In late 1928, the ministries of Interior and Finance issued joint regulations establishing agencies in all counties called "finance bureaus" (ts'ai-wu chu, later called ts'ai-cheng chu). These were to centralize all county tax operations. Their effectiveness was limited by the fact that all existing organizations that managed public property (k'uan-ch'an chi-kuan)—referring here to the kind of special-purpose elite-managed offices that had sprung up around the time of the Revolution of 1911—might continue to exist, but under the supervision of the finance bureaus.

During the late twenties and early thirties, the effort to extend provincial power over county resources generated confusion and conflict in local government. The finance bureaus were not strictly a part of county government. Although nominations for their directors were to come from county magistrates, in practice the appointment of directors became the prerogative of provincial Departments of Finance, and the bureaus came to be oriented toward their provincial patrons and supervisors in these departments. Consequently a bureau director tended to assume a status equal to that of the magistrate himself: he could issue
documents independently, both downward to collection agents and upward to the provincial financial department, without reference to the magistrate. This left the county yamen little influence in the collection or disbursement of taxes, except to the extent that the magistrate was able to circumvent the power of his provincial superiors. The relationship of the financial bureau to the provincial government may be pictured analogically as similar to the old Ch'ing system, in which (until the 1860s) the provincial treasurer's office was administratively responsible to the Board of Revenue in Peking, rather than to the office of the provincial governor.

At the same time, the magistrate's power was further diminished relative to the province by the fact that other departments (t'ing) of provincial government (notably those of education and economic development) also established bureaus at county level; each of these specialized agencies sought to garner the special-purpose tax monies (chuan-k'uan) in its sphere of responsibility. Thus the finance bureaus themselves seem to have been competing for local resources along with agencies of other provincial departments. To further complicate the situation, the county office had its own financial section (k'o), which was empowered by the provincial Department of Civil Affairs (Nei-cheng-t'ing) to manage the internal financial affairs of county government.

The contest for resources developed around the question of the very surtaxes and excises that had formed the basis for the expansion of local elite powers during the early years of the republic. In the intervening decades, county governments had apparently succeeded in bringing at least some of these new taxes under direct bureaucratic control, while others remained within the purview of local elite-managed specialized agencies. The Nationalist government's concerted effort to reduce or eliminate surtaxes and excises was therefore an attack on both the local elite and upon the county governments themselves, whose financial administration was considered to be wasteful, corrupt,
and inefficient. Thus the campaign against sur-
taxes and excises, while pictured in government
pronouncements as an effort to reduce the burdens
of the taxpayers, must also be understood as a
central link of the rebureaucratization process
and a means for enhancing provincial power over
the local tax base.35

Ironically, although the financial bureaus
were only marginally successful in gaining control
over the dispersed special-purpose funds, their
impact upon county tax administration was serious
enough to push some counties into insolvency.
In 1930 the Kiangsu provincial government had to
abolish the financial bureaus in 17 counties which
had big shortfalls in tax collection in order to
forestall the imminent bankruptcy of the county
governments. These were mostly in the poor nor-
tern counties of Kiangpei, where magistrates were
in a chronically weak position relative to local
strongmen. Provincial subsidies were granted to
some counties just to maintain basic government
operations. What probably happened was that the
financial bureaus were able fairly easily to cut
off some funds that had been under the control of
the county governments, while remaining essentially
helpless to cut into the taxing power of the local
elite. When the bureaus were now abolished, their
powers were absorbed into the financial sections
of the county governments. This is the first in-
stance of the policy of "abolishing bureaus and
changing to sections" (ts'ai-chü kai-k'o), which
later became a systematic reform measure promulgated
by Chiang Kai-shek's Nanchang headquarters. In
1931, eight more counties underwent the same proc-
ess. By 1934, the remnants of the bureaus' respon-
sibility in the province were ordered formally ab-
sorbed into the county government structure.36

Thus it seems that the financial bureaus as
an institution for rebureaucratization of finance
and the enhancement of provincial power were an
utter failure. The reasons are still incompletely
understood, but we may guess that they had some-
thing to do with the relative ease with which they
could attack the sources of the county yamen's revenue, and the difficulty of attacking the entrenched (and more diffused) financial powers of the local elite. The result was to weaken county government without greatly strengthening the province.

Another important aspect of the KMT effort to reassert bureaucratic control over local finance was the establishment, during the early 1930s, of county-level units known as financial affairs committees (ts'ai-wu wei-yuan-hui). Like many other administrative reforms during this period, this one took place within the format of Communist-suppression. In 1932, the General Military Headquarters of the Hupeh-Honan-Anhwei Communist Suppression Region issued regulations for county-level committees, staffed by local elite, to "inspect" the administration of county finance, as well as to oversee collection and disbursement of county revenues. These functions were to be carried out under the magistrate's supervision, however, and the committees were clearly not supposed to be in a position to intervene effectively in financial management. Why, then, were they formed? One reason was clearly the desire to do away with the ubiquitous special-purpose taxing and disbursement (chuan-k'uan) agencies manned by elite on the county level by subsuming them all under an umbrella organization: a committee with elite participation but under bureaucratic control. One authority describes the process as a classic instance of rule through selective co-optation, of "using gentry to control gentry" (i-shen chih-shen).37 Another aspect of the new committees, however, suggests an attempt to deal with the old problem of elite disaffection that dated from Ch'ing times. To enlist elite support in the regime's struggle against its internal enemies, the KMT could hardly afford to ignore the local gentry struggle against official and clerkly financial malfeasance, a struggle that dated from the late empire. That contest for county-level resources, exemplified by the Yü Hsien-keng case in the 1820s, was still going on more than a century later. To deal with this kind of elite disaffection, at the same time that
actual control of county finance was being rebureaucratized, was evidently an aspect of KMT policy that attempted to take account of the increased participation of the elite in local administration since the late nineteenth century.

One of the more important directives issued by Chiang Kai-shek's Nanchang military headquarters in 1935 was one that revamped the structure and responsibilities of the financial affairs committees. Collection and disbursement were now stripped from them and turned over to bureaucratic agencies directly under the financial section (ts'ai-cheng-k'o) of county government. The qualifications for service on the committees were amplified to include "formal training, or experience, in financial administration," a provision evidently designed to exclude the old-style gentry types with their parochial orientations and pre-modern outlooks. Committees were no longer authorized to send proposals or complaints directly to extra-county units. Thus the financial affairs committee was placed squarely under the thumb of the county magistrate; and became more than ever mere window-dressing for the ongoing process of financial re-bureaucratization. 38

The frustrating experience of the early thirties gave rise to new policies on local finance, which were finally embodied in a series of directives from Chiang Kai-shek's headquarters in 1935. Most important were regulations which essentially returned taxing authority to the county—in effect abandoning the principle of direct provincial involvement—and attempted, at the same time, to take taxing authority away from local elites and centralize it under the county offices. The financial bureaus were to be abolished, and all county financial affairs were to come under the county financial section, an integral part of county government. Under this section, a tax-collection office (ching-cheng-ch' u) collected both county and provincial taxes and turned them over to the county treasury (hsien-chin-k'u). The treasury, which was the only remaining unit in the system under direct provincial
supervision, took the custodial power of tax monies out of the hands of local merchants, to whom tax revenues had been lent at interest under the old system. The treasury's custodial agents were now supposed to be modern-style banks. Of particular importance was the prohibition on tax-farming: all receipts for tax-payments had to bear the personal chop of a regular government functionary. As a further centralization measure, the number of special-fund tax collecting agencies was sharply reduced.

How successful these measures might have been over the long term is impossible to tell, because the disruptive effects of the war were soon to intervene. P'eng Yü-hsin's authoritative study suggests considerable initial success in many provinces under KMT control. There remained some intractable problems, however, among which the most serious was the lack of able, modern-trained financial managers. The inevitable result of this personnel problem was inadequate supervision by finance-section heads and continuing reliance upon the traditional clerk-runner type of county functionary. With this problem far from solution, it seems doubtful that county government was able to achieve the kind of centralization and control over local revenue envisaged by the new regulations.39

By the mid-thirties, the piled-up problems of local finance exhibit a full cross-section of historical strata going back to Ch'ing times. As expounded in a 1934 report by Chao Li-hua, Director of the Kiangsu Provincial Finance Department, the deepest stratum (recalling complaints in mid-Ch'ing memorials) was the problem of tax-resistance and pao-lan by local elite, along with embezzlement and malversation by the clerk-runner group. All the traditional problems of the tax system, including the clerks' monopoly over tax-records, had been exacerbated since the loss of the "fish-scale registers," presumably during nineteenth century rebellions. Thus although there were no real "peoples' deficits" (min-ch'ien), the tax revenues were
not reaching the government. A more recent stratum of dysfunctions was that of the surtaxes and special-purpose taxes, which trenched upon provincial revenues by weakening the state's ability to collect the basic landtax, with the result that too great a proportion of tax revenues remained somewhere within the counties. Areas such as education and public security, which were not even included in county budgets, therefore could hardly be inspected and controlled from the provincial level. This familiar litany of official grievances suggests not only that the Nationalists' attitudes toward local finance embodied many elements common to their Ch'ing predecessors, but also that the rebureaucratization process had made very limited progress by the mid-thirties.40

An instructive contrast is the attitude of republican governments toward merchants as tax-farmers. The group pre-eminently involved were the licensed brokers, whose appraising and mediating role in traditional commerce made them convenient agents for state taxation. The history of ya-hang involvement in the revenue system comprises two parallel trends: the proliferation of local markets in Ch'ing times due to the increasing commercialization of the economy; and the state's increasing reliance on trade taxes after the mid-19th century. Early Ch'ing policy viewed ya-hang as impediments to trade, a layer of unproductive middlemen whose numbers were to be limited by quotas. Hence the original brokerage licenses (ya-t'ieh) were designed principally as a control device, even though licensed brokers were entrusted with the collection of small miscellaneous taxes from merchants whose deals they handled. The commercial boom of mid-Ch'ing, however, meant a continuous pressure upon ya-hang quotas, a pressure that was turned to advantage by revenue-hungry county personnel who issued unauthorized licenses for a price. Thus by the early 19th century, brokerage taxes were an important illegal revenue source on the county level, a rough equivalent to the customary fees (lou-kuei).
The potential revenues from brokerage taxes were apparent to national and provincial governments during the late nineteenth century. From the selling of brokerage licenses, the government moved rapidly toward heavier taxes on ya-hang profits. The fiscal crisis occasioned by the Boxer indemnity payments began a process of ever-intensifying pressure on ya-hang, a process that continued under the warlord governments. The First National Financial Conference in 1928 finally went all the way toward transforming ya-hang into state tax-collection agents; instead of merely taxing licenses and profits, county and provincial governments now treated the ya-shui as a general tax on commercial transactions, in place of the old brokerage commissions. The whole system was now handled through a layer of tax-farmers, who contracted with county governments to deliver a specified revenue from the ya-hang in their areas. Evidently the administrative bias against tax-farming had never been as strong in the commercial sector as it was in the agricultural, perhaps because state authorities were relatively successful in actually acquiring the proceeds. 41

With the notable exception of the ya-hang system, the Nationalists' reform measures of the thirties plainly suggest an attempt to drive the local elite out of the tax system once and for all, this time by the introduction of modernized methods of accounting and centralized bureaucratic management. Particularly significant, however, is the government's ambiguous position on the problem of the "bad gentry" (lieh-shen). As a regime that came to power in a context of mass mobilization, the KMT could plausibly oppose lieh-shen as a parasitic local group that had to be curbed because of its exploitation of the peasantry. Indeed, the pronouncements of both the Wuhan and Nanking regimes expounded this rationale during the late twenties. Under the Nanking government, however, the treatment of lieh-shen began to shift toward
more traditional formulations. By the early thirties, lieh-shen were objects of suppression, not because they exploited the peasantry, but because they impeded the state's control over local resources. In either respect, lieh-shen were public enemies, but the issues were easily confused during the transitional period of the Republic. As a partially modernized political machine with an ideological inheritance from the United Front of the mid-twenties, the KMT could hardly turn its back on the anti-lieh-shen spirit of the Northern Expedition. As a re-bureaucratizing force, however, the KMT provincial governments found themselves in very much the same position, with respect to the land-tax, as the provincial authorities of the Ch'ing.

It is instructive to speculate on what would have happened if the Nationalists had decided simply to legitimate the local elite as a part of the tax-collection apparatus. Was there potential material here for a penetrating system of local networks, filling the administrative gap between county and village, which might have served both state and society? Judging by descriptions such as Chao Li-hua's, KMT provincial authorities saw no chance that state interests could be served by networks of tax-farmers on the county level. To interpolate some thoughts into Chao's argument, we might suggest that the stratum of local elite which had de facto control over so large a fraction of resources was hopelessly ineducable by modern standards; that any provincial or national government that sought the rebureaucratization of Chinese politics—to say nothing of their modernization—would have to build its local networks on different kinds of people with different outlooks.

In retrospect, it did matter that the Ch'ing never legitimated gentry tax networks. The fact that such middlemen always existed on the margins of respectability—or outside them—made it unlikely that they could serve the governments of a modernizing nation. Under the Republic, inherited state attitudes toward middlemen in the land-tax system
actually tended to weaken the remnants of the county elite, making it even less likely that they could serve Nanking as a satisfactory network of local control.

NOTES

1. I have written elsewhere about the significance of "local self-government" as a manifestation of both these trends: "Local Self-Government under the Republic: Problems of Control, Autonomy, and Mobilization" in F. Wakeman and C. Grant, eds., Conflict and Control in Late Imperial China (Berkeley, 1975), 257-298.


3. The account that follows relies primarily on Liang Fang-chung, Ming-tai liang-chang chih-tu (The grain-tax administrator system of the Ming period). Shanghai, 1957; Obata Tatsuo, "Kônan ni okeru rikô no hensei ni tsuite" (The organization of the li-chia system in Kiangnan) Shirin 39.2 (Mar. 1956) 1-35; Michel Cartier, Une réforme locale en Chine au XVIe siècle: Hai Jui a Chun' an, 1558-1562 (Paris, 1973); Kuribayashi Nobuo, Rikôsei no kenkyû (A study of the li-chia system, Tokyo, 1971); Jerry Dennerline, "Fiscal Reform and Local Control: the Gentry-Bureaucratic Alliance Survives the Conquest" Wakeman and Grant, Conflict and Control, 86-120. I have also been influenced by Mí Chu Wiens' important paper, "Origins of the Ming-Ch'ing Gentry," delivered at
the Conference of the American Historical Association, 1974.


5. Ibid., 338-346. Hsiao Kung-chüan's well-known treatment of li-chia was written before works such as Obata's and Kuribayashi's had clarified the nature of li-chia units in Ch'ing times.

6. For normative descriptions of this sort, see Chu Shou-p'eng, ed., Kuang-hsu ch'ao tung-hua-lu (Tung-hua records of the Kuang-hsu reign; hereafter THL), Peking 1958 edition, 1588 (memorial of 1883), and Ch'ing-chi hsueh-hui, comp., Ts'ai-cheng shuo-ming shu (Explanation of financial administration, hereafter TCSMS), (Peking, 1915). Kwangsi edition, national tax section, 95. The governing document on kun-tan, dated 1701/2, is in Ch'ing-ch'ao wen-hsien t'ung-k'ao, CP ed., of the Shih-t'ung, 4867.

7. Tien-na is a common theme in late Ch'ing documents: for example, see THL, Kuang-hsu, 1372 (1882); and ibid., 1588 (1883). Also TCSMS, Kweichow, revenue section, 163.

8. TCSMS, Kwangtung, land-tax section, 23; Kwangsi, national tax section, 96-97.

9. The county in question was Tan-t'u, Kiangsu. See Tan-t'u hsien-chih, 1930, 5:21-22. Various accounts of the i-t'u system occur in THL, Kuang-hsu, pp. 1655 and 1806 (memorials of 1874) and TCSMS, Kweichow, land-tax section, 139. This is the same system described by David Faure in "Land Tax Collection in Kiangsu Province in the Late Ch'ing Period" Ch'ing-shih wen-t'i 3.6 (1976) 49-75.

10. See the interesting case of Ch'ang-shan county, Shantung, where the immunities of one market town were carefully made part of the official record and engraved on stone tablets by local people, presumably merchants and gentry. The case is described
in Katō Shigeshi, Shina keizai shi kōshō (Tokyo, 1952-1953) 2:549-550. Material on Ch'ang-shan and on the ya-hang system in general is being developed jointly with Dr. Susan Jones in the Chicago project on Social Change and Local Leadership.


12. A memorial of 1882 ranks tax engrossment alongside interference in litigation (pao-lan tz'u-sung) and illegally controlling land reclamation (pa-ch'ih keng-huang) as ways in which gentry "interfered in public affairs." (Management of lawsuits on behalf of others, also a kind of "pao-lan," was statutorily prohibited.) An edict in reply orders strict prosecution of the offenders. THL, Kuang-hsu, 1311.

13. An edict of 1754 makes the prohibition against compulsory tax-farming by gentry (le-pao tu-t'u) a part of the penal code: Ch'ing-ch'ao wen-hsien t'ung-k'ao, 4889. For the other cases cited, see THL, Kuang-hsu, pp. 1588, 1655.


15. Ibid., p. 5640 (1907).

16. TCSMS, Kwangsi, national tax section, 97-98.

17. Chü-jung hsien-chih (Gazetteer of Chü-jung county, Kiangsu; 1904 edition) 5:53ab. Han Wen-ch'i, Kung-shou t'ang tsou-i (apparently from the 1820s) 6:65-74. I am grateful to Prof. James Polachek for calling the Yu Hsien-keng case to my attention and for sending me xeroxes of the Han Wen-ch'i documents.

18. TCSMS, Szechwan, land-tax section, 3-6. New categories of tax (which apparently began in Szechwan) included the "local expenses" tax (chin-t'ieh) and the "contributions" tax (chüan-shu). Curiously,
payers of the chüan-shu were rewarded with merits toward the acquisition of official rank (i-hsu), an institutional borrowing from the regular rank-sale system (chüan-na); but chüan-shu was not voluntary, and it was attached to the land-tax assessments.

19. THL, Kuang-hsu, 739 (1879).

20. I have discussed the theoretical origins of this movement in "Local Self-Government" (see note 1).


22. TCSMS, Shansi, Prefectural, etc., management section, 129-131, et passim. See also TCSMS, Fukien, excise section, 19-25, for the source and expenditure of about 80 different kinds of excise, the main categories of expense being police and schools.

23. THL, Kuang-hsu, 5639 (1907).


25. Liu Ju-yü, Tzu-chih kuan-shu (Official writings relating to self-governance) Taipei, 1969. (Tzu-chih here has a somewhat different meaning from its twentieth century version.) This plan is contained in a magistrate's report of 1853/4, 5-7.

27. TCSMS, Kweichow, revenue section, 165.

28. THL, Kuang-hsu, 5640 (1907).

29. TCSMS, Chihli, land-tax section, 31-32.

30. P'eng Yü-hsin, Hsien ti-fang ts'ai-cheng (County local finance) Shanghai, 1945, 142.

31. Ch'ien Tuan-sheng, Min-kuo cheng-chih shih (Governmental institutions of the Republic) Changsha, 1939, 579-580.


33. Schoppa, Ch. VI.

34. This paragraph and the two that follow rely on P'eng Yü-hsin's work (see note 30), 142-170, by far the best scholarly account of KMT local finance. See also Wang Hou-che, comp., Hsien-hsing hsien-cheng fa-kuei hui-pien (Current regulations on county government; Shanghai, 1932) 3-4; and Hou Ch'ang. Hsien hsing-cheng kai-lun (County government; Nanking, 1946), 201.

35. Materials on the campaign against surtaxes and excises may be found in Ts'ai-cheng nien-chien (Financial administration yearbook; Shanghai, 1935) issued by the national Ministry of Finance, 2261-2412. The campaign was a major theme of the government-sponsored Second National Financial Conference, May, 1933. See Ti-erh-tz'u ch'üan-kuo ts'ai-cheng hui-i hui-pien (Proceedings of the Second National Financial Conference; Nanking, 1934) 1-4 et passim.

36. On the history of the financial bureaus in
Kiangsu, see Chao Ju-heng, Chiang-su sheng-chien (Kiangsu province handbook; Shanghai, 1935), part 4, ts'ai-cheng, 23-27.

37. P'eng Yu-hsin, 147.

38. Ibid., 158.

39. Ibid., 149-159.


41. The legislative history of ya-hang can be traced in the Huang-ch'ao wen-hsien t'ung-k'ao, CP ed. of the Shih-t'ung, pp. 5135-5137. Various provincial editions of the TCSMS describe the early 20th century situation: see for example, Chihli ed., tsa-shui section, pp. 10-11. Also see Feng Hua-te, "Ho-pei sheng ya-shui hsing-chih chih yen-pien" (The changing nature of the brokerage tax in Hopeh) in Fang Hsien-t'ing, ed., Chung-kuo ching-shi yen-chiu (Studies on the Chinese economy) 1067-79. The Japanese literature on ya-hang is extensive.
Rule-challenging and testing on the part of social movements are characteristic of threshold periods. And it is this threshold quality, or what the anthropologist Victor Turner terms "liminality," which lends the Republican era of Chinese history its special character. In order to recover the meaning of that special quality and make political sense out of it, we need to free ourselves of the notion that politics is always dominated by leaders and organizations. Sometimes the cumulative effect of ordinary people, under pressure, improvising on ritual and institutional forms—the effect of people moving against the grain of social structure—can generate its own political momentum, symbols and insight. Or, as Turner argues:

The result of confrontations between monolithic, power-supported programs and their many subversive alternatives is a socio-cultural 'field' in which many options are provided, not only between programmatic gestalten but also between the parts of different programs... the culture of any society at any moment is more like the debris, or 'fall-out,' of past ideological systems, than it is itself a system, a coherent whole. Coherent wholes may exist (but these tend to be lodged in individual heads, sometimes in those of obsessionals or paranoiacs). But human social groups tend to find their openness to the future in the variety of their meta-

*Richard R. Weiner is Assistant Professor in the Dept. of Sociology and Political Science at the University of North Florida, Jacksonville.
phors for what may be the good life and in the context of their paradigms. If there is order, it is seldom preordained (though transiently bayonets may underpin some political schema); it is achieved—the result of conflicting or concurring wills and intelligences, each relying on some convincing paradigm. 2

In the summer of 1929, a social researcher named Huang Kung-tu surveyed the opinions of one particular social group in Peking, the city's rickshaw pullers. Among the one hundred men in his sample, Huang found just such a variety of metaphors, as evidenced by their answers to the question "What is revolution?":

can't explain clearly (10 out of 100), warfare (8), the Three People's Principles (8), overthrowing Japan (5), overthrowing imperialism (5), a divided North and South (4), making trouble (4), overthrowing foreigners (4), overthrowing Chang Tso-lin (3), overthrowing the bad guys (3), no peace in the world (3), equality between men and women (3), overthrowing everything (3), times of anarchy and disorder (2), freedom and equality (2), everyone becoming an official (2), overthrowing the reactionary clique (2), to rebel (2), overthrowing the capitalists (2), overthrowing the warlords (2), overthrowing corrupt officials (2), overthrowing bad things (2), a unified country (2), having nothing to eat (1), unions and peasant associations (1), the Principle of People's Livelihood (1), overthrowing the Communist Party (1), pacifying everything (1), overthrowing evil gentry and local bullies (1), who does not aim at being emperor? (1), overthrowing Wu P'ei-fu (1), loving China (1), everyone overthrowing everyone else (1), Sun Yat-sen overthrowing Chang Tso-lin (1), unity (1), setting up unions (1), Long live the success of the revolution! (1), joining the Party and becoming an official (1). 3
In Peking, as in other urban centers of Republican China, rickshaw pullers formed a huge underclass of men who had lost or given up their jobs in farming, handicrafts, commerce and other areas of employment. Their déclassé ranks included fishermen, musicians, actors, policemen, soldiers, miners and cooks. Their political views, as the laborers' replies to Huang's queries reveal, were a mixture of conventional wisdom, political insight, traditional clichés, modern clichés, sayings, slogans, cynicism, humor and bewilderment.

Writing about another time and place, Antonio Gramsci noted that: "The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appears." To many contemporary observers, rickshaw pulling was a clear expression of the morbidity of the moral economy of the city. As a group, the pullers were despised and pitied. They were pictured as living miserable lives of dependency and compulsion. The sociologist Li Ching-han, writing in 1924 as the rival Peking streetcar company was about to begin operations, stated that:

> With the exception of beggars, rickshaw pullers -- these human beasts of burden -- are the most impoverished people [in Peking]. . . . Unfortunately, because they have no education and lack organization, although these poor people see their rice bowls threatened [by the streetcar], all they can do is cry out in frustration.

However even rickshaw pullers, under certain conditions, were capable of concerted political action. Two months after Huang Kung-tu completed his survey, Peking rickshaw pullers achieved an extraordinary concurrence of wills and intelligences in a riot which nearly wrecked the streetcar system. The riot was more than a simple act of machine-breaking. It was, as an analysis of the event and its origins will show, the culmination of a social movement which challenged, and illuminated,
the dominant social, political and economic rules of the game in Peking.*

The problem. Edward Rhoads, writing on the Republican Revolution in Kwangtung, states that:

Unquestionably, the most astounding aspect of social change after 1895 was the extent to which a large segment of the Chinese population was politicized. The process of politicization . . . was a radical departure from the governmentally enforced tradition of popular non-involvement in political affairs . . . 7

In other words, people thought about society and politics in a new way. And they acted on the basis of a new kind, or new kinds, of consciousness. People translated their personal troubles into public issues.8 Within the socio-cultural "field" of late Ch'ing and Republican China, new public political spaces were mandated or improvised. Law, custom and popular demand combined to create new forums of political discourse from the social medium of guild halls, tea houses, restaurants, theatres, squares and market places.

Many of the people to whom Rhoads refers could read and write. Others talked to people who were literate and had their points of view recorded. As a result, we have written statements of what people were thinking and feeling--letters to the editor, posters, statements to reporters, autobiographies, constitutions, petitions, and manifestos. But most people who became politicized and involved were illiterate. They were illiterate, but not inarticulate. The historian is thus forced to deal with fragments of popular culture, the testimony of literate contemporaries, and his or her own explanation of popular intentions--intentions which form the realm Frederic Wakeman has called "mass


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fears, mass hopes, mass movements."⁹

In coming to grips with the realm of popular intentions and actions, the tendency (to return to Turner's language) is to measure popular politics against set ideological systems. The focus is on finding out how people reacted to individuals with coherent wholes lodged in their heads, on the assumption that coherence—well-defined ideology and organization—constitutes the only chance to make history, the only chance to carve out a realm of freedom or politics within the realm of necessity. And so Philip C. C. Huang writes in a critique of Western scholarship on revolution in the Chinese countryside:

The most obvious questions—how did the revolutionary movement and the countryside interact? how did they shape each other?—have yet to be asked systematically. . . . To what extent did the actual behavior of different rural classes correspond with predictions of the revolutionaries?¹⁰ (our emphasis)

Note that the "predictions"—and one might add symbols, ideas, policy, leadership and programs—are on the side of the revolutionaries. The rural classes contribute "behavior," behavior which derives its historical meaning from whether or not it fulfills the predictions. Huang cites Roy Hofheinz's study of peasant movements in the 1920's as an example of a Western attempt to come to terms with obvious questions. And Hofheinz does address the dichotomy, established by Huang, between revolutionary elite and rural masses. Hofheinz's answer is that the failures and successes of the Communist-led peasant movement had virtually nothing to do with predicting behavior. He labels Mao's "Hunan Report," a key document of revolutionary analysis, an "utter fantasy."¹¹ The Communists were successful, according to Hofheinz, because of their mastery of political technique, manipulation of the rural environment, and understanding of the
primacy of politics. ("Cultural preconceptions, social structures, or economic forces are merely preconditions for political action and not their determinants.")

One of the most revealing passages in Hofheinz's study of peasant movements is his statement that "Unlike P'eng P'ai, the true founder of the peasant movement, Mao was a late convert to the rural strategy who arrived at it largely through calculating observation rather than the practice of rural campaigning." (our emphasis)

The idea that elites, not peasants, found movements and that revolution is 'made' by ideology and organization is a common theme in the writings of 20th century revolutionaries, opponents of revolution, and social scientists alike. As Sheldon Wolin has argued, a common language which is militarily, technologically and tactically oriented, has developed to analyze social movements and revolution. As a consequence, "the gap between 'military and sociological categories' is being bridged." Openness to the future is not seen in the contesting of paradigms, but in one "monolithic, power-supported system" being imposed. Order underpinned by force no longer appears so transient. Or as Wolin speculates, the true founder of a modern social theory may be Clausewitz not Comte. And the most astute present day practitioner may be General Giap.

When a social movement acquires an ideology and organization, it is a watershed moment. It usually generates a crisis among the rank and file and the emergent, or intruding, leadership. Choices are made and alternatives are closed off. But to appreciate the meaning of these crises of ideology and organization, it is important to understand what was lost, added and changed. The yardstick we need is an understanding of the social movement in its own right, however well or badly it fits the predictions of competing political paradigms.

Social movements are important not only be-
cause they are the collective expression of expectations and awareness of social realities, and because they are capable of altering political outcomes and policy, but also because they can be seen as a collective or popular comment on the nature of institutions and structures of dominance. They are important messages from the basic level of society. And they are more than blind messages. They invariably form part of a dialogue—an exercise in political discourse.

The theoretical context.* The French political sociologist Alain Touraine has pointed out:

Every institutional system is limited. every claim is not negotiated, all social interests are not represented, certain kinds of collective conduct are responses to the blockage or closedness of the institutional system.15

Such collective conduct goes beyond the given institutional framework and questions what Jürgen Habermas refers to as the underlying principle of organization within a particular social system.16 This collective questioning is most often referred to in the literature of social sciences as social movements.

Social movements can simply express vague discontents. At a higher level, and given enough time, social movements can create symbols which are meaningful to all participants. This creative interaction with the environment is essential for even the shortrun survival of a social movement. "A movement has to be constructed and has to carve out a career in what is practically always an opposed, resistant or at least indifferent world."17 The social movement in its historical career cuts

across the grain of social structure. It encounters competing frames of reference—competing patterns of choice and consciousness.

The frame of reference consists of an actor's awareness of interests (i.e., what he has in common to lose or to gain), the actor's expectations (i.e., what can be expected with regard to actions) as well as—and most significantly—the actor's formation of some collective identity. The process of identity-formation is what E. P. Thompson describes in his book The making of the English working class as occurring

... when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs.¹⁸

For the Critical Theory of Society of two generations of the Frankfurt School, following in the traditions of Hegel, Simmel and Lukacs, this process of identity-formation is understood as one of self-cultivation or Bildung. Bildung is akin to Thompson's idea of a class or other collectivity being self-made. The concept of Bildung describes the manner in which an identity is constituted (i.e., "formed" or "cultivated") within a social collectivity. A collective identity is designed in common.

The concept of the collective identity-formation of social movements derived from a critical theory perspective starts from the seeming second-nature reality of already constituted conventions, norms and rules. This social reality is marked by conflict as well as consensus. As Touraine notes, "Society is not merely a system of domination: it is a system of social relations, of debates and conflicts, of political initiatives and claims, of ideologies and alienations."¹⁹ Such debates and conflicts can be visualized as what Victor Turner calls "social dramas" in which choices are posed,
in which there is describable interaction, and which take place within "fields" and "arenas."

In the present context, "fields" are the abstract cultural domains where paradigms are formulated, established, and come into conflict. Such paradigms consist of sets of "rules" from which many kinds of sequences of social action may be generated but which further specify what sequences must be excluded. Paradigm conflict arises over exclusion rules. "Arenas" are the concrete settings in which paradigms become transformed into metaphors and symbols with reference to which political power is mobilized and in which there is a trial of strength between influential paradigm-bearers. "Social dramas" represent the phased process of their contestation.20

This second-nature reality of rules and roles is commonly known as the "rules of the game." These conventions, norms and rules function in part to remove whole aggregates of social norms from public questioning and discourse.

Social movements, however, question the rules of the game." As Manuel Castells notes. social movements are "a type of organization of social practices, the logic of whose development contradicts institutionally dominant social logic" and "interferes with," and indeed "contests the very ground rules of civil society."21 A social movement, in Touraine's words, is "engaged in a struggle which overflows the frame in which it appears."22

Rules can never prescribe human behavior to the last detail. The elementary social behavior in social movements is thus not driven out by rule-making or constituting, but survives alongside it.23 And when the collective action characteristic of social movements comes to work at cross purposes with practices which have become legitimated as an institution, a conflict situation emerges.

Once more, Alain Touraine calls to our attention some crucial points.
1. Society must not be taken for what it is, for its forms of organization and its rules of functioning. What appears as the framework for social behavior is in reality the always limited, fragile, badly integrated result of the conflicts and the transactions that occur between the classes and the social forces derived from them. These are the actors of a society's historicity, actors that animate and interpret a society's system of historical action, which is to say its social and cultural field of development.24

2. A social movement cannot be organized unless this definition [of a collective identity] is conscious, but the formation of the movement largely precedes that consciousness. It is conflict that constitutes and organizes the actor.25

3. In the practice of interactions [over time], the principle of identity presents itself as a transcendence of the group or category that is its bearer. The workers in a factory, a workshop, or a town, view themselves, in certain circumstances, as engaged in a struggle that overflows the framework in which it appears, that mobilizes demand that cannot be entirely satisfied within an organizational or political framework.26

The key question on which we wish to focus is how emerging collectivities question the "rules of the game" and their application in concrete situations. How do reactions differ according to their perceptions of the chances of altering or transforming (through political) means that system of rules? The paradigm for understanding people's reactions to the rules of the game is not simple observation, but dialogue; in phenomenological language, not "brute facticity," but inter-subjective understanding.27 Linguistic and institutional
structures of symbolic interaction constitute both the foundations of the "rules of the game" and the referents of practical reasoning (the latter providing the basis for either accepting or questioning the rules).

The concept of identity-formation draws methodologically on such diverse sources as historical analysis (Weber); the hermeneutic approach of historiography and legal interpretation (Habermas); notions of role-sets (Merton) and role-taking (Cicourel), as well as notions of rules (Winch); and "interpretation procedures" as well as "accounting procedures" (Garfinkel, McHugh) prevalent in the approaches of the symbolic interactionist and ethnomethodological schools.

Institutions are practices which are transmitted from generation to generation. We can consider the verbal statement of a rule (i.e., what ought to be done) as the first step in the making of an institution. Practices, Wittgenstein reminds us, represent "obedience to a rule." For the anti- and counter-institutional activity signified by social movements, the notion of institution is crucial—crucial, that is, in terms of the hegemony of the prevailing ideas directing action and supportive of the presently constituted social system.

Standardized behavior clusters into complexes of expectations we refer to as roles. These expectations adhere to social positions and define the range of permitted (legitimate) deviations from the rule. And the clustering of these complexes of actions carry with them the force of the institutions into which they are aggregated. Role-sets, as Merton reminds us, often contain contradictory latent or manifest expectations. These contradictory expectations serve to articulate possible role-sets and attendant altered rules and opportunities beyond the present situation, when that situation's institutionalized mediations become unworkable.

Rules define systems of expectations and regularize behavior. Patterns of social relations are
structured partly by the (1) unintended rules resulting from the forces of production men devise and which underlie man's situation as objectively constitutive rules; and (2) intended rules of acceptable behavior within the situation ("rules of the game"). e.g.

(a) constitutional rules--the legal constraints and procedures defining legitimate practices and "setting up the game"; and

(b) conventional rules--maxims for doing well and succeeding within the politically defined constitutional procedures and the economically constituted practices. 34

All practical reasoning involves the consideration and use of rules in specific situations. One either abides by the rules or engages in a critique of the rules.

The figure on the next page summarizes the relationship between the rules of the game and consciousness of the rules. The horizontal axis of "awareness" involves "consciousness of structures of dominance." The vertical axis can be understood in terms of "practical reasoning"--that is, deliberation and dialogue over the conditions of the good life.

In terms of our four empirical situational property spaces, we can appreciate those of ascribed or objective class interest (1 and 3)--the situations of demographic social aggregates and institutionalized pressure group organizations--as basically situations where class consciousness does not emerge, where the rules of the game are obeyed.

Conversely, we can appreciate situations of perceived or subjective class interest (2 and 4)--those of social movements and the organized social class--as being essentially situations of class consciousness. By class conscious social movements we mean those engendered and conditioned by the underlying structures of dominance in society, i.e.,
Consciousness of "STRUC-
DISSENSUALLY
DEVLOPING
"STRUCTURE"
OF A
COLLECTIVE
CONSCIOUSNESS

via

LATENT

1. Demographic
Social
Aggregate

ABIDING
i.e. rule-
abiding

PRACTICAL
REASONING
i.e., de-structures and re-
structures

via

intuitive
Social
Movement

CRITIQUING
i.e. rule-
critiquing

2. Intuitive

("LATENT" involves spontaneous action)

LEGEND:
LA (latent-abiding): "as a rule," "rule-governed," "functional regularity"
LC (latent-critiquing): "rule-testing"
MA (manifest-abiding): "rule-conforming," "rule-applying," "rule-reforming"
MC (manifest-critiquing): "rule-transforming"

Property-space #1 involves "PLURALISTIC IGNORANCE" (i.e., without consciousness)
Property spaces #2, 3, 4 involve "Conscio-
ness of Kind: and "COMMON KNOWLEDGE OF OBJECTS OF MEANINGFUL REFERENCE" (i.e., with consciousness)
TURES OF DOMINANCE"

Institutionalized Pressure Group
"political consciousness

Organized Social Class Agent
"political class" consciousness

REALM OF "CONTINGENT"*
(EMPIRICALLY DISCOVERABLE)
CLASS** CONSCIOUSNESS

REALM OF "TRANSCENDENT"
(OR "TRUE"*)
UNIVERSALIZING CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

"Guiding Idea" of 5. a Class-less Society

*following Georg Lukacs, History and Class Consciousness [1922]
**"CLASS" is defined here with regard to the transformation of the systems, i.e., "totalities," emanating from objects of meaningful reference
the forces of production and administration.

Consequently, we can understand the situations of social movements and organized social classes as criticism of the "rules of the game." And thus we can adapt our four-fold model to an understanding of the development of an "immanent critique" of those rules.

Property-spaces 1 and 3 are those of rule-abidingness: #1, the situation of demographic social aggregates being one of rule-exhibiting where in empirical description we resort to such metaphors as "as a rule," "rule-governed" and "functional regularity"; and #3, the situation of institutionalized pressure group organizations, being one of "rule-internalizing," where we commonly use such metaphors as "rule-conforming," "rule-following" and "rule-applying"—a situation which we can label as purely "political consciousness."

Property-spaces 2 and 4 are situations of rule-critiquing: #2, the situation of social movement tests the rules of the game: and #4, the situation of organized social class transforms those rules.

We should interject here that in the situation of institutionalized rule-conforming, rule-following and rule-applying (#3), there is a certain amount of rule modification or "rule-altering." This type of action may lead to a reform of the rules of the game without fundamentally changing the system that the rules engender.

In situation #4 we often are confronted with moments where all forms of mediation (rules, roles and norms) are absent. These are the revolutionary "moments of madness" in which a collective social drama displaces and seeks to overthrow the rules and roles of the dominant social structure.

The Peking labor movement and the 1929 street-car riot: a case study.

One, what one? he is so poor that he becomes a rickshaw puller.
Two, what two? He is afraid that the rickshaw
owner will deduct the rickshaw rent.

Three, what three? A few coppers are earned with one day's labor.

Four, what four? On seeing the rickshaw puller, the policeman finds fault with him.

Five, what five? Nobody is so miserable as the rickshaw puller.

Six, what six? If the rickshawman refuses to pull the soldier, he will be beaten.

Seven, what seven? The rickshaw lacks customers with the appearance of the tramcar.

Eight, what eight? The whole family depends on him.

Nine, what nine? He does not dare become a soldier.

Ten, what ten? If he ends his life by drowning in a river or jumping into a well, nobody knows.

--a Peking street song

Hsiang-tzu, I know you are not willing to make loans, but it would be a way of buying your own rickshaw much earlier. It's a suggestion! If I were a man and pulled a rickshaw, I would pull my own. I would do my own pulling and my own singing. In 10,000 things. I would not seek help from anyone! If only I could. I wouldn't change it for a county magistrateship! To pull a rickshaw is a bitter thing. But if I were a man, and had the strength of a band of sworn brothers, I'd pull a rickshaw anyway and not go and be a policeman.

--the money lender Kao Ma to the rickshaw puller Hsiang-tzu in Lao She's novel Lo-t'o Hsiang-tzu (Camel Hsiang-tzu)37

* * *

On the evening of October 1929, crowds of laborers, mostly rickshaw pullers, were waiting outside the headquarters of the Peking General Labor Union (GLU) (made up of 24 unions and as many as 67,000 members*).38 Inside, union representatives

*The figure of 67,000 is from a government
were engaged in a power struggle for GLU leadership. A block of 17 unions led by streetcar, electric light company and telephone workers was trying to vote out of office the incumbent GLU leadership, which was allied with the rickshaw pullers' union. The meeting broke up without resolving the question of leadership, an issue complicated by the fact that while the insurgent GLU group could muster the greatest number of union representatives, the incumbents could claim the support of the rickshaw pullers—the largest single union representing the biggest group of workers in the city. As the crowd of laborers moved away from the GLU headquarters it momentarily blocked the passage of a streetcar. As had happened many times in the past, an argument broke out between rickshaw pullers and the streetcar conductor and driver. The argument led to a fist-fight which ended in the rickshawmen destroying the streetcar.

This act marked the beginning of a full-scale city-wide riot. Thousands of rickshaw pullers, joined by a smaller number of street sweepers, sewer and drain cleaners and road repair workers, attacked, and damaged or destroyed, over fifty streetcars. Estimates of the size of the crowds participating in the destruction ranged from several thousand to 25,000. The laborers, many of them armed with clubs, seized control of several major avenues. By nine p.m. crowds of rickshaw pullers were laying siege to the offices of the streetcar company in the eastern part of the inner city and the streetcar union in the southern part of the outer city. Finally, at ten p.m. the troops of the Peking garrison command were called out. The soldiers advanced in lines with fixed bayonets along the wide avenues. In some areas of the city, including the lanes and markets surrounding the besieged streetcar union office, soldiers and laborers report. According to these figures 50,457 were members of the rickshaw pullers' union. The next largest was the 2,701 member water carriers' union.
fought brief skirmishes, rifle butts against fists and clubs. But, in a short while, the troops succeeded in clearing the streets and in turn besieged, and eventually arrested about 1,000 workers at a rickshaw pullers' union branch office in the northern part of the inner city.

In the aftermath of the riot, soldiers closed the offices of the unions involved in the disorder. A total of 1,278 alleged rioters were arrested. Most were released on the condition that they leave the city. A few received prison terms. Four union leaders were executed. The GLU held a reorganization meeting in which a new ruling group was installed, with modern utility and factory unions as the leading force. The streetcar system remained closed for a month and a half and then reopened after having received tax credits and permission to raise fares.

As one newspaper reporter covering the story wrote, "this riot was for Peiping unprecedented." Like the rest of urban China in the 1920's, Peking saw many strikes, rallies, protest marches and demonstrations. But the attack on the tramway system was the decade's only large scale riot. Whether one adopts the English dictionary definition of a "wild, violent, public disturbance of the peace" or the term for riot found in the press and government documents--pao-tung or "to assemble a large number of people in order to kill, pillage and commit other acts of violence, including such actions of a political nature"--the tramway riot stands out as a moment of uncommon and wild, if peculiarly discriminate, disorder. One would have to go back to the troop riots of 1912 and the Boxer Uprising for comparable instances of city wide upheaval. If we classify the latter two cases of urban disorder as, respectively, officially sanctioned looting and the product of an anarchic battle plan, we are left with only one example of riotous civil disorder in the whole of late Ch'ing and Republican era Peking--the Tramway Riot.

The singularity of the event excited a good
deal of speculation in Peking as to its cause and social meaning. The popular Peking daily Shih Pao (Truth Post), under the headline "Tens of thousands of rickshaw laborers attack tramcars," reported:

Because they feel the effects of the tramway on their trade, the city's rickshaw pullers assembled yesterday along the four tramway lines and proceeded to launch an attack on the cars. . . . Ever since the Peking tramway was built, the average rickshaw puller, in his job, has acutely felt its impact.

The reporter for the Hua-pei jih-pao (North China Daily News) cited a number of possible causes including factionalism, revenge, economic conflict of interest, religious antagonism and mob psychology.

The riot began as a problem of GLU reorganization and then unexpectedly dragged in the people who attacked the tramway. In general there were three causes: (1) The tramcars shuttle back and forth among the city's markets from early morning to late at night . . . and the residents of the city pay close attention to them. Because it was angry at its defeat (in its struggle with the "new faction"), the old GLU leadership, having no other way to vent its anger, enticed workers to attack the tramway and in this way plotted an outrage and fomented terror. (2) The reason most rickshaw pullers took this move was that, among the pullers and tramway workers in the past, there had been disputes. Most recently, the rickshaw pullers union demanded that the tramway company increase its fares. The rickshaw men were rebuffed. The pullers saw that the tramway business and their own livelihood were at loggerheads. (3) At 5 p.m. the day before yesterday (the 22nd) reporters saw Buddhist monks in the large
crowd forming at Feng-sheng Lane in the West City (the site of the first attack on the streetcars). No doubt this affair (the riot) had been affected by the disorders which took place two days before at the Iron Mountain Temple. The Temple had been seized by the tramway union (for a school for the workers' children). So, during the riot, when the rickshaw pullers attacked the Bridge of Heaven (the place in the outer city where the tramway union headquarters was located), the Bridge of Heaven rickshaw pullers union branch and the nearby Flower Market branch were both still in an agitated state and joined in.

Throughout the city, foolhardy rickshaw pullers brought about this vast tragedy, either because they were forced or because they simply gathered together in a mob of tens of thousands. If there is some other complicated inside story to explain the affair, it's not possible for an outsider to know what it is.41

The establishment KMT in Peking, which had backed the GLU "new faction," in fact, attempted to provide an inside story to explain how the unions for which the Party was supposed to be responsible had fallen into such disarray.42 The KMT blamed the leader of the old leadership group, a labor politician named Chang Yin-ch'ing, and his "friends and acquaintances" for the riot. The KMT did not explain how Chang, who had allegedly "clutched the unions in a monopoly grip" and "acted without regard for the opinions of the workers," had managed to secure such a large following among the rickshaw pullers.

It fell to the mayor of Peking, Chang Yin-wu, to present the official version of the riot, the version which eventually justified the execution of four labor leaders and the relatively lenient treatment of the rickshaw pullers arrested in the riot. Mayor Chang stated that " . . . it took only three or four people to direct and incite the great
crowd of rickshaw pullers, who acted as if they were intoxicated, to attack and destroy the tram-cars." According to Chang, the tactical problems of mobilizing so many people in so short a time were overcome by the fact that the tramway and the tramway union had become in recent months Peking's "choicest target" for attack. Not only did the tramway have a "direct, personal effect on the interests of the rickshaw pullers," but, as Chang noted, "ever since the blue sky and white sun flag (of the Nationalists) was planted in the city (June 1928), the tramway union has been getting into conflicts with military and police circles." And "... most recently the union got into disputes with road repair workers and with the Buddhists."

Chang Yin-wu balanced the conventional notion that a few outsiders or corrupt and ambitious insiders were capable of stirring up and misleading the people with the recognition that real issues had been at stake in events leading up to the riot. Mayor Chang, and most other observers, believed that the alliance between revenge-seeking politicians and discontented laborers was a momentary one. Explanations for the actions of each group were to be sought separately. The most convincing argument for the presence of a separate and distinct rickshaw puller interest and consciousness rested on the fact that the tramway-rickshaw dispute, as journalists and officials pointed out, had its own history, a history which predated the Northern Expedition and local KMT factionalism.

The rickshaw had been introduced to Peking in 1886 from Japan by way of Tientsin. Despite early resistance (by the rival carters' guild, by the Boxer rebels who condemned them as foreign, and by custom which, for example, made their use by women unseemly), rickshaws achieved dominance as a mode of intra-urban transport by the mid-teens. Spurred on by the general economic boom of the World War I period and by public demand for cheap transportation over Peking's sprawl of governmental,
cultural and commercial centers, the number of rickshaws reached a peak of 44,200 in 1924. Since most rickshaws were rented and worked in two shifts a day, this number of vehicles could provide jobs for over 60,000 men. Then in December 1924 the Peking streetcar system opened and began competing with the rickshaw. Six months later the number of rickshaws in the city and suburbs had dropped to 25,877.

Four years later, in the heat of riot, the rickshaw pullers recalled the events of 1924 and 1925 and the shock which had been delivered to their trade by the tramway.

Among the cries uttered by the rickshawmen who were organized into parading thousands as the evening wore on, was that the tram company had never lived up to the promise to provide a fund toward the relief of the indigent among them.

The promise had been made in 1924 as the result of a fierce debate among a range of commercial, governmental and public interest groups over the impact of the streetcar system on the livelihood of the rickshaw pullers. At that time, the rickshaw pullers had been a silent partner in conflict and discussion over the issue. By 1929 the laborers as a collectivity had found their voice. Rather than being confined to their former role as a passive instrument of elite machinations, the pullers found themselves in a position to take advantage of the power struggle in the GLU in order to destroy their chief economic rival. For a few hours, then, thousands of laborers rejected the emerging political consciousness which accepted the rules of GLU representation (property space 3—the situation of institutionalized pressure groups). Instead the rickshaw pullers and allied street workers chose rule-challenging and rule-breaking (property spaces 2 and 4, the situations of rule-critiquing).

The "political" consciousness of the rickshaw
pullers can be traced to what we may call the expanding group politics milieu of the teens and twenties. The class consciousness and choice of a rule-critiquing frame of reference were made possible by the rickshaw pullers' experience of "social dramas"—debate and conflict over the rules and roles governing daily life and work. Particular social dramas were consolidated into a social movement in which the laborers were able to transform personal troubles into public issues simply by being aware of the mounting anomalies in their own lives and the fact that this experience of social drama was a shared one. Consolidation of social dramas among the rickshaw pullers was evident in the months preceding the October 1929 riot. The laborers were involved in an escalating series of debates and conflicts with policemen, soldiers, the Chamber of Commerce, the streetcar company, bus companies, the municipal government and students. Rickshaw pullers rejected many of the conventional roles assigned to their status—roles of subordination concisely summarized in the street song which introduces this section—and in doing so engaged in collective conduct which went beyond the given institutional framework.

The question of the rickshaw pullers as a social problem was first raised in the mid-teens when the trade entered a period of rapid expansion. In compendium of Peking police laws published in 1915 one notes a succession of codes designed to regulate the trade. The growth of the city's modern, bureaucratic police force paralleled the growth of the rickshaw trade. A good deal of the day-to-day politics of the rickshaw puller involved complying with or resisting police orders on where to park and where to travel. This is why the street song contains the line "On seeing the rickshaw puller, the policeman finds fault with him" and why in answer to the question "What is the national government?", a Peking rickshaw puller replied "the police department."

By the late teens the official and propertied
classes in the city began to express some alarm over the size and poverty of this occupational group. A prominent politician was accused of organizing a rickshaw pullers' union in 1919. The police conducted an investigation and concluded that there had been no meetings of the laborers in recent months. The accused official, a former Minister of Justice named Lin Ch'ang-min, defended himself by arguing that it was virtually impossible for the rickshawmen of Peking or any other city in China to organize or act in their own interests.

The absurdity of this fear is evident when it is remembered that industries in this country are still in their infancy, huge factories or works have not been established and the Chinese laborers, as a rule, are lacking in unity in a larger sense. There is even less reason to fear that the rickshaw men who have no capitalists over them, have no place from which to demand less labor hours and more pay, and have no interest in common among themselves will create a labor problem for the time being.49

Lin's remarks were perceptive. Even though an industrial complex was emerging in the coastal cities, inland cities like Peking were not dominated by a factory system which pitted capitalists directly against workers. On the other hand, other forms of domination were capable of engendering political and class consciousness among laborers in general and the rickshaw pullers in particular. In 1918 Shanghai rickshaw pullers attacked the city's tramway company depots, destroying eleven cars and wrecking workshops.50 The issue in the disorder was the belief by the rickshaw pullers that the tramway company was behind new police regulations over the rickshaw trade, regulations which had led to the revocation of one coolie's license which in turn had set off the riot.
At first it was thought in Peking that a streetcar system was the answer to the rickshaw problem. In Communist theoretician Li Ta-chao's 1919 agenda for municipal reform in Peking, he states that "until the tramway is built, the livelihood of the rickshawmen should be improved" by supplying low cost or free food and clothing. But as the Peking streetcar system actually began to be financed and constructed (1921 to 1924), many people in the city came to realize that there were few alternative occupations for the tens of thousands of rickshaw pullers.

The idea for the Peking streetcar company originated in the last years of the Ch'ing. It was supposed to be part of a modernized urban infrastructure which included a water works, electric light company, telephone system and a modern police force. All of these new institutions were in fact created with the exception of the street-car system. In 1913 the French were given a wide range of concessions to continue the modernization of Peking, including the rights to build a tramway, as part of a loan deal with Yuan Shih-k'ai. Nothing was done about the streetcar project until the fall of 1920 when an agreement was reached among the Chinese and French governments, the major French bank in China, and a group of Chinese investors, to make the streetcar company a joint official and private business corporation. The government share of the financing was to come from a Sino-French loan which in turn was based on French rights to Boxer indemnity monies. The whole affair was enormously complicated and involved political scandals in Paris and Peking, the European munitions trade, and financial activity generally classified under the rubric of "bureaucratic capitalism" (5/10 of the private investors were directly or indirectly related to officialdom, 3 or 4/10 were prominent financiers, 1/10 were ordinary citizens from the provinces and only 1/10 were natives of Peking). The streetcar project was embroiled in con-
flict from the very beginning. The first reports of opposition were from rickshaw owners, pullers and local gentry. The latter were angry at the way in which the stock sale had been manipulated in favor of the interests of outsiders. A newspaper report in August 1923 noted that "since it was established, the streetcar company has been quarreling with the electric company, the telephone bureau, the Chamber of Commerce and self-government groups . . . ." The tramway project meant the imposition of a new transport grid over the maze of existing commercial and industrial networks, and a wide range of interests were drawn into public debate over expected changes in the city's political economy.

Issues generated by the debate included how much electrical energy would be needed, the effect on the incidence of traffic accidents, the raising or moving of telephone and electrical lines and ceremonial arches, and the degree of public control over the utility. But the one issue which came to dominate the rest was the effect of the streetcars on the livelihood of the rickshaw pullers. Local politicians and in particular the president of the Peking Chamber of Commerce raised the vision of thousands of laborers being thrown out of work as soon as the streetcar system opened.

Chamber president Sun Hsueh-shih viewed the issues of the streetcars, welfare, unemployment and local order as all cut from the same cloth. On behalf of the rickshawmen, he demanded that the streetcar company contribute a yearly sum for the maintenance of "poor people's factories" for out-of-work rickshaw pullers. When negotiations over the contribution, which included the police chief as well as the Chamber and the company, broke down in the winter of 1923-24, Sun ordered the shops under control of the Chamber not to pay taxes to support the police. The police put pressure on the company and a sum was agreed on. The streetcar system began operations in December 1924 and the impact on the rickshaw trade was less severe than anticipated. In fact the two modes of trans-
portation seemed to complement each other, since vast commercial and residential areas of one and two story houses and shops and narrow, twisting lanes constituted an effective barrier to the extension of the streetcar lines beyond the main avenues. But this fact did not lessen the antagonism between the company and the laborers, a grievance legitimized but not resolved in the political debates of 1923 and 1924. (The factories envisaged in the settlement remained in the planning stage.)

Which brings us to the politicization of the rickshaw pullers themselves. The sphere of public discussion and politics in Peking was bounded by both informal convention and by law. Legal associations (fa t'uan), like the Chamber of Commerce and consortia of elites, had access to the public arena through the de jure or de facto right to hold meetings and petition the government. But the public arena was also heavily, and bureaucratically, policed to limit access. Groups like students, dissident politicians, women and laborers had to fight to overcome (after Touraine) "the blockage or closedness of the institutional system." These fights, debates and rule-challenging provided the "elementary social behavior" for the social movements of the 1920's in Peking.

The problem for the rickshaw pullers was not an inability to translate personal troubles into grievances in their own realm -- the street, lower class tea houses, slum courtyards and rickshaw sheds. As Lao She, the most sensitive observer of Peking social life in the twenties and thirties, notes:

Among rickshawmen, individual grievances and difficulties were matters of common gossip. At intersections and in small tea shops, the rickshaw pullers describe and quarrel about their own affairs and then these affairs become the property of everyone. They travel from place to place like a folk song.
The problem was to make these grievances public. The breakthrough moment in this regard for the rickshaw pullers and other workers occurred during the 1925 May 30th movement. The focus was nationalism and protest against violations of China's sovereignty, but the freedom of action and assembly made possible by the movement led to an intensification of local and labor politics. Strike activity, which typically fell off in the summer after the customary spring guild bargaining, continued and addressed both nationalistic and economic issues. Some occupational groups like the water carriers guild tried to settle a backlog of private grievances. Twice in June 1925, at the height of demonstration activity, the water carriers assembled on the pretext of joining a protest march, only to veer off and attack dissident guild members on one occasion, and to march on their rival, the water works plant, on another.

Other groups sought not tactical advantage but formal recognition and guarantees. Following participation in a particularly grueling and dangerous demonstration in November 1925, 600 rickshaw pullers—claiming to represent their fellows throughout the city—demanded the right to form a union and asked the warlord Feng Yü-hsiang for protection.

But the real crisis of ideology and organization for the Peking labor movement and the rickshawmen in particular came in 1928 and 1929 with arrival of the Northern Expedition. The politicians and labor organizers traveling in the wake of the KMT armies saw a ready-made framework for consolidating power in the group politics milieu which had grown up in the twenties, and for co-opting the social movements which had survived alongside the institutions they had been critiquing. The KMT set up labor unions under the GLU, and political associations for women, merchants, students and peasants. The initial achievement in union organizing was impressive. There was an increase in the number of strikes and most were settled on terms favorable to workers. The col-
lective bargaining procedure worked well among the city's small core of workers in modern industry—the streetcar, electric company, water works, carpet factory and postal workers. But groups like the rickshawmen, street sweepers and common laborers, who were outside of the factory and modern enterprise system, did not benefit from the wave of strike activity.

Beginning in late 1928 the press began to report a succession of incidents, at union forums but also in streets and courtyards, in which rickshaw pullers struck out at practically every institutional and social force which impinged upon their status as members of the city's class of laboring poor—people defined by their labor and their poverty. It is as if the rickshaw pullers as a collectivity sought to rewrite the street song cited above and renegotiate their entire "role-set," and do their "own pulling" and their "own singing" and "in ten thousand things... not seek help from anyone."

In November 1928 the municipal bureau in charge of public utilities tried to make the rickshaw pullers buy new registration plates. An indignation meeting was held at union headquarters at which the laborers not only refused to accept the new policy, but also demanded that the bureau devise new welfare measures for rickshawmen and order the streetcar company to increase its fares so that the pullers could compete more easily. In early December, in a poor area in the northwest part of the inner city where "there are many residences and most are inhabited by poor people who are either peddlers or rickshawmen," a police tax collector tried to make a 30-year-old rickshaw puller with five dependents pay the monthly house tax. (House tax money went to pay for the police department.) The laborer refused on the grounds that he did not even have money to buy food. Police reinforcements were sent and the rickshaw puller tried "armed resistance" but was finally subdued and taken away. In the same month, responding to complaints by the rickshaw pullers
union about not delivering on the 1924 promise of relief measures, the streetcar company and the Chamber of Commerce each contributed funds for a poor people's factory.\textsuperscript{58}

In March 1929, the government tried to impose a new tax on travel along the paved road to and from the Western Hills temple and recreation area to the northwest of Peking.\textsuperscript{59} The tax not only affected rickshaw pullers who took fares out from the city on excursions but also peasants who brought their produce in from the western suburb. Both peasants and rickshaw pullers held a protest rally at the offices of the municipal government. The rickshaw pullers complained that they had already petitioned a district level police station but no action had been taken. The 1300 workers added that life had been difficult enough since the streetcars had begun running and the capital had been moved south.

In May, after their petition to the municipal government had been rejected, rickshaw pullers in the western suburbs held a protest meeting to demand restrictions on bus service to the Western Hills district.\textsuperscript{60} A compromise was reached in July after lengthy negotiations between the rickshawmen and the bus company, mediated by municipal agencies. In July, in the same district west of the city walls, a fight broke out between rickshaw pullers and police in which ten people were injured.\textsuperscript{61} The trouble began when the police intervened in a union dispute. The workers demanded the right to discipline a member. The policeman attempted to make the pullers release the offender. A crowd formed. The policeman whistled for help and reinforcements arrived. Four union men were arrested but one police officer was captured and carried off to the union branch office in the area.

Also in July, in an article entitled "Peking promised spectacle of clash between tramway company and rickshawmen," a local newspaper described a new controversy over the streetcar company's
plans to add more cars at night to make it possible for residents to take pleasure rides around the city. The police and other municipal agencies were reported trying to mediate the conflict in which the laborers were described as belligerent and threatening to use force. By the end of July, with fights between rickshaw pullers increasing in frequency and tensity, the GLU announced that it would not take responsibility for a fight over any issue if it involved more than five workers.

At the end of August, an incident took place which focused attention on rickshaw puller resentment at police regulation. In the afternoon of the 31st a policeman told a rickshaw puller to move his vehicle out of a "no parking" zone at the entrance to a public park in the outer city. The rickshaw puller refused and a fight broke out. Police and soldiers nearby came to the aid of the policeman and rickshaw pullers in the vicinity rallied to their comrade. Three workers were arrested and taken to a nearby district police office. Later that evening hundreds of rickshaw pullers surrounded the police office (which would have as many as 100 policemen on the premises) and forced the police to give up the imprisoned workers. As a result of this open defiance of police authority, the GLU and the police met to draw up a set of rules entitled "Measures to prevent conflict between rickshawmen and the police." The measures included the statement that "the Public Safety Bureau will train policemen not to look down upon the rickshawmen nor treat them with disrespect but to regard them as the equals of other classes of people."

On September 5 a group of students rode rickshaws to their school compound and then entered without paying. The rickshawmen tried to follow but were stopped and clubbed by school guards. In a short while, rickshawmen were able to mobilize a force of 100 laborers led by a union official. The workers entered the school compound (of the Law University), seized one of the offending stu-
dents, took him to the union headquarters and held him until, through police mediation, a cash settlement was agreed on. A week later rickshaw pullers again clashed with police over traffic regulations, with a crowd of over 200 workers assembling before being dispersed by police with clubs. Later in the month a fight broke out near a public park between rickshawmen and a group of soldiers, the latter being a class of urban sojourners with a long reputation for abusing rickshaw pullers. A few days later a rickshaw puller was robbed and murdered outside one of the city gates and his union branch drew up a petition demanding that the police find the perpetrator.

From this perspective—a view of rickshaw pullers pushing a borrowed, shop-worn ideology and organization to the limits in order to make their demands heard and felt—the streetcar riot which took place less than a month later is more understandable. One broken rule led to another and another until by the fall of 1929, most of the economic, social and political structures affecting the laborers had been illuminated through debate and conflict. Old issues like the 1924 streetcar-rickshaw puller settlement were raised again at the workers' insistence.

The social movement of 1928-29 focused the previously inchoate views and discontents of individual rickshaw pullers and created the conditions for concrete political acts. Collective action was thus made possible even though the rickshaw pullers remained disorganized and lacked "coherence" relative to rival unions and dominant political and economic formations in Peking. When Huang Kung-tu asked the laborers in the summer of 1929 what "revolution" and "the national government" meant and what labor unions were for, there seemed to be no consensus on these key terms.

Q. What is the national government (kuo-min cheng-fu)?

A. officialdom (15 out of 100), the Three

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People's Principles (14), those in official positions (13), don't know (12), the Kuomintang (6), the Revolutionary Party (6), overthrowing imperialism (4), taking care of the people (3), Chiang Kaishek (3), Long live the National Government! (2), Sun Yat-sen (2), the biggest officials (2), the Chinese people (1), Nanking (1), the people's government (1), the Nanking government (1), the police department (1), the President (1), the ones who do things for the people (1), overthrowing the Communist Party (1), the Commander-in-Chief (1), the rich (1), the instrument of the people (1), the nation (1), not Chang Tso-lin (1), military officers (1), Nanking and Peking (1), the National Army (1).

Q. What is the purpose of labor unions?

A. holding meetings and demonstrating (19), handling negotiations (10), protecting workers (7), carrying out the Three People's Principles (5), advocating benefits for workers (5), taking care of workers (5), revolution (4), collecting union dues (3), not allowing workers to be bullied (3), uniting workers (2), freedom and equality (2), making trouble (2), overthrowing the tramway (2), overthrowing imperialism (2), overthrowing reactionaries (2), striving for the nation (1), showing workers' anger (1), helping victims of injustice (1), mediating disputes (1), poking one's nose into other people's business (1), The world is for everyone! (1), to strike (1), handling negotiations with soldiers (1), to share good fortune and bad (1), to get rid of the sufferings of workers (1), to carry out the principle of People's Livelihood (1), to deal with misfortune (1), to think of nothing but oneself and one's own gain (1), overthrowing automobiles (1).

The words for national government variously conjured
up in the minds of rickshaw men a collection of bureaucrats, a set of ideals, a leader (living, dead or deposed), soldiers, a democratic govern-
ment, a paternalistic regime, a place, a class, and a program for action. For twelve men the words conjured up nothing, or at least nothing they were willing to relate to Huang. Likewise ten persons gave no answer on the meaning of "rev-
olution." But others offered that the term meant war, achieving an ideal, disorder, unity or, most commonly, overthrowing (ta-tao) something or some-
one. There were fewer abstractions and cliches, and there was no reticence, on the subject of labor unions. Neither was there consensus on the goals, methods or value of unions. The pul-
lers' answers project images of the union as a center of political activity and ritual, an arena of conflict, an instrument for achieving specific goals, the embodiment of an ideal, a cockpit of intrigue and unbridled ambition, protection against misfortune and exploitation and a meddler in one's personal affairs. Without much diffi-
culty one can extract competing frames of ref-
ere from the laborers' answers--patterns which predisposed the respondents to reform, rebellion or withdrawal.

Huang Kung-tu, writing after the riot and in light of the results of the survey, concluded that:

Peiping rickshawmen--at least the ones I tested--certainly are to an extent class con-
scious (chieh-chi i-chih). Their experience of life makes them aware of their own misery. At the same time they have acquired a kind of understanding of things. They know that by using collective action (t'uan-t'i hsing-
tung) and potential for organization, they can, within certain limits improve their lives.

. . . However, they do not clearly comprehend their surroundings. They have no clear idea of the present political, economic and social
situation, and no understanding of labor movement methods. They have power. But because they do not clearly understand their environment, they lack correct goals and methods. A derailed locomotive can do harm to both passengers and by-standers.72

Certainly, the vision and frame of reference which led to the streetcar riot "derailment" demonstrated that the rickshaw pullers were trapped by their own symbols—or rather the symbols made for them in the 1923-24 debate—the streetcar and the rickshaw. Also along this line, one of the most potent segments of the rickshaw pullers' role-set was the ubiquitous policeman. The police comprised one of the rickshaw pullers most important "reference groups." To one of Huang's questions, "What is the advantage of studying?", one laborer answered "(you can) become chief of police."73 And at the height of the riot many rickshawmen seem to have assumed the role of policeman and done what some may have wanted to do for a long time—direct traffic. "For some time they were complete masters of the streets, holding up all sorts of traffic, stopping motor cars and searching them, questioning the occupants and refusing passage through certain streets."74 But, while the crowds were "masters of the streets" for a few hours, those same avenues led to the soldiers' barracks and to the suppression of the riot. On the other hand, despite the losses suffered by the laborers who took part—and the labor movement in Peking in general—the streetcar was forced to raise its fares as the rickshaw pullers' union had demanded.

Huang's statement that the rickshaw pullers had no clear idea of their situation and no understanding of labor movement methods goes too far. The laborers understood the methods well enough to use the ones they found to their advantage and to reject others—like the GLU representation system. Many of the statements in the survey—"The National Government is the officialdom,"
"Labor unions are for holding meetings and demonstrating" and "My life is bitter"—do reflect a clear view of dominant social and political realities. Other statements—"The National Government is the police department" and "Labor unions are for overthrowing the tramway"—reflect a special perspective, and insight. The government of the street and the slum courtyard was the police department. Huang suggests that the respondent who made this connection spoke out of ignorance rather than out of an ironical appreciation of the coercive face of the state. But this caricature, whether drawn from ignorance or irony, reflected a key part of the social reality of being a rickshawman or a member of the city's class of laboring poor. It reflects the fact that the world of the laboring poor was bounded less by a lack of formal education than by administrative force—by a structure of dominance.

In the case of the streetcar riot, a marginal idea and a marginal group— informs by practical reason, and participation in the career of a social movement—formed the basis for a moment of collective action and a critique of the way the city worked.

The world-view of the rickshaw puller was closer to reality than Huang Kung-tu and other contemporary observers suspected. In fact, if one wanted to know what life and politics was like in Peking in the 1920's, a rickshaw man was a good person to ask. He spent his working day on the streets of the city watching and listening. He negotiated fares, argued with policemen about traffic regulations and exchanged gossip and information with his fellows, passengers and passersby. The rickshaw puller may not have had the merchant's knowledge of market conditions, the official's grasp of political hierarchy, the militarist's appreciation of the fine points of strategy and the location of moveable wealth, a newspaper editor's knowledge of current events or the student's sense of national mission and proprietary right to the political spotlight. But he was an
eyewitness to history as it paraded by. Chang Tso-lin's black limousine with machine guns mounted on the hood, the coffin of Sun Yat-sen, the troops of conquering and retreating armies, massed demonstrators, political prisoners being led to the execution ground, and the newly-laid track of the French-built streetcars were all part of the world of the Peking rickshaw puller. That world—the world of the street, the courtyard slum and the rickshaw shed dormitory—was shared and affected by merchants, officials, soldiers and intellectuals who rented rickshaws to, taxed, pressed into military service, and harrangued the pullers.

In reconstructing a portrait of politics in Peking and elsewhere in the Republican period, one task is to locate individuals and collectivities in the social and spatial structure of town and countryside. Another is to catalogue their political actions and collect their statements, looking for both shared and separate institutions and perspectives. In this way we can gain an appreciation of both dominant values and patterns of organization "on track," to borrow Huang's locomotive metaphor, and those values and patterns "derailed."

In reconstructing the historical careers of particular cases of public questioning and collective identity formation, the sociology of social movements is essential. A focus on social movements helps us to better appreciate the dramatic moments of engagement in which certain forms of institutional life are altered or destroyed.

NOTES


2. Ibid., p. 14. Turner attributes the idea of
culture as "ideological debris" to Harold Rosenberg.


8. C. Wright Mills, The Sociological Imagination, New York, 1959, p. 8. Mills makes the distinction between "the personal troubles of milieu" and "the public issues of social structure."


12. Ibid., p. 305.


19. Touraine, pp. 30, 75.


22. Touraine, pp. 311-12.


24. Touraine, p. 298.

25. Ibid., p. 311.

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26. Ibid., pp. 311-12.


37. Lao She, Lo-t'o Hsiang-tzu, Hong Kong, p. 91.


41. Hua-pei jih-pao 10/24/29 in Hatano Ken'i'ichi, 10/1929, p. 299.

42. STSP 10/25/29 p. 7.


44. Li Ching-han, p. 1.


47. Ching-shih ching-ch'a fa-ling hui-tsuan (A Compendium of Peking Police Codes), Peking, 1915.

48. Huang Kung-tu, p. 177.


52. **STSP** 7/1/21, p. 7.


54. **STSP** 8/17/23, p. 7.

55. Lao She, Lo-t'o hsiang-tzu, pp. 6, 7.


57. **STSP** 12/6/28, p. 7.


64. **STSP** 9/1/29, p. 7; **NCS** 9/1/29, p. 15.

65. Pei-p'ing kung-pao #13, 9/5/29, public security, pp. 2–3.

66. **STSP** 9/7/29, p. 7.


68. Pei-p'ing kung-pao #14, 9/28/29, social affairs, p. 5.

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70. Huang Kung-tu, pp. 176-77.

71. Ibid., pp. 164-65.

72. Ibid., p. 179.

73. Ibid., p. 178.

74. NCS 10/24/29, p. 11.
The Dazhai production brigade in Shanxi province has been famous as a rural development model for 15 years. A wealth of material analyzing Dazhai has been published during this time by Chinese commentators as well as foreign visitors, journalists, and scholars. Up to late 1977 the implications of the Dazhai experience for Chinese economic development were intensified and broadened by the movement to promote Dazhai-type counties as building blocks in the agrarian program. Xiyang county, home of Dazhai brigade, was transformed into a Dazhai-type county in the years 1967-1970, and since the 1970 Conference on Agriculture in North China publicized Xiyang's achievement, 300 more counties were said to have become advanced in learning from Dazhai. The "learn from Dazhai" movement reached a high point in the period between the two national conferences to develop Dazhai-type counties, the first in September-October 1975, and the second in December 1976. At both conferences, the present Chairman of the Party, Hua Guo-feng, took the lead.\(^2\)

The campaign to build Dazhai-type counties has been a vast, complex design for technical modernization, economic growth, and social and political change that called for one-third of all Chinese counties to become "Dazhai-type" by 1980. The program for rapid agricultural growth has been to rely on strengthened county leadership, mechanization, basic farmland capital construction, and scientific farming. At the same time it has explicitly sought to raise the production and income of poor collective units and has suggested a goal of gradually improving and, more implicitly, equalizing the livelihood of all commune members.

Despite suspicions some Western scholars have raised concerning discrepancies between official accounts and the actual conditions of Dazhai brigade's success, and, by extension the authenticity of the Dazhai experience,\(^3\) the
prominence of Dazhai and Xiyang xian as Chinese development models over a period of years suggests that to the fullest extent possible the pattern of their economic, political, and social transformation should be investigated and understood. Based on newly available information, the present study is one of our many endeavors intended to accomplish this task. In interpreting data related to the great changes that have been underway for some decades, our study as a whole leads us to two broad observations.

(1) Economic growth and increasing economic equality along several dimensions have been positively interrelated factors in the Dazhai-Xiyang instance of rural development and modernization.

(2) Certain types of change in the structures of political leadership, ownership, management, income distribution, and residential patterning have been instrumental in inducing and reinforcing such development and in particular, meeting the key challenge of maintaining and organizing a vigorous rural labor force over the long run.

In this first of two articles, we focus on the institutional underpinnings of economic development in Xiyang county, identifying and describing seven important aspects of political-organizational innovation that have accompanied dramatic economic and technological growth. The subsequent article will then analyze the data in order to lay bare the key relationship among rural labor force, growth, and equality in the course of development.

In this project we rely primarily on two sources: first, the many Chinese publications on the subject including those focusing on the Xiyang (Dazhai-type county) experience as well as earlier material on Dazhai, and second, the collection of notes and impressions gathered by co-author Tang Tsou in the course of a 25-day visit to Xiyang xian and some additional time spent in Beijing in the fall of 1977. Having requested and received permission from Chinese authorities for such a tour, Tsou visited seven communes and 14 production brigades in Xiyang and met many people willing to share important details of the developmental history of their locality.4
Interviews during these visits turned up interesting information and insights not included in official written sources. They contained surprises for those who had read much of the available published material. The new items of information shed light on some, but not all, aspects of the combination of political and economic factors that have been part of the rapid transformation of the area.

Aspects of Institutional Transformation in Dazhai Brigade and Other Units in Xiyang County, 1958-1977

(1) Changes in ownership structure. In an interview in November 1977, Chen Yong-gui discussed the factors responsible for Xiyang's success in increasing agricultural production and in becoming the first Dazhai-type county. After having mentioned the determination and the accumulated experience of the new county-level leadership in undertaking "farmland capital construction in a big way," he immediately added that in Xiyang, farmland capital construction could not have been undertaken on a large scale if the brigade had not been made the basic unit of account and if the system of three-level ownership of the means of production—the commune, brigade, and team, with the team the basic unit of account—had not been changed into a system of two-level ownership by the commune and the brigade. Formerly, he noted, each small village had been divided into several production teams. Without this transformation, he emphasized, there would have been no way to achieve substantial development of socialist agriculture in Dazhai village and Xiyang county\(^5\) (Tsou, 1977). His emphasis on this basic institutional change illustrates the significance of attempts throughout China to find appropriate forms of ownership, structure of management, and scale of organization in the countryside. And it reminds us of the continuing difficulties in doing so.

Contrary to common practice, since 1960 Dazhai brigade has directly managed production and carried out what is called "unified accounting" for the whole village, and from 1966, and especially after the second year of the Cultural Revolution, this practice was extended across the board in Xiyang county. It is indicative of the political sensitivity of this subject that 1960 was not identified in official sources as the year in which the production team
level was abolished in Dazhai until it appeared in a book published in summer 1977 (Dazhai jingyan, 1977: 15-16). In Dazhai, the important step taken in 1960 followed many drastic alterations of the internal structure of the Dazhai brigade and of its external relations with neighbors and higher-level units during the periods of cooperation and establishment of people's communes. Periodically since 1960, the nationwide search for appropriate institutional forms in the rural area has posed new questions and new challenges to the contemporary institutional arrangements in Dazhai and Xiyang, including the system of basic accounting at the brigade level. At the same time, the institutional changes set in motion in 1960 established important conditions for further internal development. Thus, to understand the significance of the Dazhai-Xiyang experiment, we must first review very briefly the rapid, drastic, and rather confusing changes in national policy on commune organization in the first few years and its subsequent evolution.

(a) Ownership and management levels: the national policy context. Official documents during the period when people's communes were established revealed perplexing ambiguities and inconsistencies which may have reflected the uncertainties and experimentations that occur in most attempts to make fundamental changes as well as political compromises at the highest level. The resolution of August 29, 1958 adopted at Beidahe by an enlarged meeting of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Political Bureau was a very short and imprecise document. Hindsight makes it even clearer that various provisions of the resolution had conflicting implications for the actual management and operation of agricultural institutions. On the one hand, the ideological thrust of the document pointed to rapid, radical changes, with a movement toward "ownership by the whole people" seen as coming in three or four years in some places and five to six years or more in others.

On the other hand, the document also cautioned the cadres to continue to utilize the current system of collective ownership and restrain a rush toward ownership by the whole people. Moreover, specific organizational provisions retained a somewhat conservative formulation, stating that in the initial stage of amalgamating the
cooperatives, the method of "changing the upper structure while keeping the lower structure unchanged" should be adopted.

The original smaller cooperatives may at first jointly elect an administrative committee for the merged coops and set up a framework to unify planning and the arrangement of work, and transform themselves into farming zones (gengzuo qu) or production brigades (shengchan dui). The organization of production and the system of management (guanli zhidu) may for the time being remain unchanged and continue as before [Gaoju renmin gongshe, 1958: 3; Bowie and Fairbank, 1962: 455].

The merged, large cooperatives would then be transformed into communes.

In addition, the system of distribution was not to be changed in a hurry. The system of sanbao yijiang and other systems under which "rewards were calculated according to work days" was to be "temporarily retained." Under the system of sanbao yijiang, a subordinate unit of production and management guarantees the fulfillment of the three fixed targets of output, costs, and labor input and will be given a bonus if it overfulfills the labor and output targets at lower costs. Presumably, this system was to govern the relationship between the commune and the farming zone or shengchan dui (generally equivalent to the higher level cooperatives prior to the summer of 1958 and to the shengchan da dui at the present time). In order to clarify the confusing terms for the three levels of the commune, Table 1 is included. Under these specific provisions, the subcommune levels of production and management were to retain important functions and control in the use of their own resources.

But the general euphoria, ideological fervor, and political climate at that time led to overzealous endeavors to build up rapidly the system of ownership and management at the commune level at the expense of the interests and authority of the two lower levels. As Mao Ze-dong himself soon discovered, many county and commune level cadres took over direct control of the means of production, labor power, and output of the production brigades; implemented the policy of equalizing income distribution between


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a. The guanli qu is a management zone which generally covered an area larger than the brigade. It could encompass the areas farmed by several brigades (Renmin gongshe jingji quihua, 1959: 190).

b. Mao's speech as printed in Mao Ze-dong xiang wansui (1969: 282, cf. p. 281). Mao was inconsistent in the use of terms. At one point, he used "dui" to denote "da dui" at a time when "dui" was generally used to refer to "shengchan dui."
the rich and the poor brigades, teams and individuals; and appropriated without compensation certain property of the brigades and transferred them to the commune as its properties (Mao Ze-dong sixiang wansui, 1969: 282). This policy of "first, equalization, and second, transferring property and labor power" encountered tremendous resistance by the peasants.6

The resolution adopted by the CCP Central Committee on December 10, 1958 at Wuchang represented a retreat from the August program. It specifically provided for a system of three-level management. It reaffirmed and extended the specific provisions protecting the autonomy of the brigade against unauthorized interference by the commune-level organs and cadres. The three levels were to be the commune; the "management zone (or production brigade)" [guanliqu (huo shengchan da dui)]; and the production team (shengchan dui). The management zone (or production brigade) was to be a unit of "economic account," but the commune was to be responsible for the profits and losses of all its constituent units including all its brigades (Renmin gongshe wenti ziliao, 1959: 33).7 Minister of Finance Li Xian-nian specifically urged that the management zone should be an "independent unit with its own incomes and expenses and its own plan of handing over its surplus to the upper level" (Renmin gongshe wenti ziliao, 1959: 33). The Production team was to be the basic unit for the organization of labor. A less formal statement praised the successful experience of the "three-fixed" system of collective responsibility (sanding jiti zeren zhi)8 under which the commune's relationship with the management zone and in turn the management zone's relationship with the production team would be governed by fixed targets for output, costs, and workday (Renmin gongshe wenti ziliao, 1959: 145). The production team would in turn control its relationship with its subordinate "labor groups" by the "five-fixed responsibility system" under which the amount of land used by the labor groups, their production arrangements, production schedules, their personnel, and their means of production, would all be fixed according to agreements worked out between the labor groups and the upper level unit. In other words, so long as they met
the agreed on guidelines, subordinate units at the various levels below the commune would retain a measure of autonomy with respect to labor and resources.

But as Mao himself admitted as early as March 1959, the document did not make clear that the system of ownership of means of production by the commune (as distinguished from ownership by the brigades and teams) could be achieved only after a "process of development" (Mao Ze-dong sixiang wansui, 1969: 283-284). Mao noted that the lower level cadres blurred the distinction among the systems of ownership by the commune, the brigade, and the team, and in effect denied the extreme significance and the continued existence of the system of ownership by the brigades and teams. Objective conditions did not permit the transformation of this system of three-level ownership to one-level ownership by the commune, Mao emphasized. On the contrary, the commune should "send down" or decentralize its authority and install a system of "three-level management" and three-level accounting with the 

The Draft Regulation on Work on the People's Commune in the Rural Areas," issued on May 12, 1961, made further changes. It is clearly stated that the production brigade (called da dui in the document as it is at the present time) would be the basic unit of account and would therefore be responsible for its own profit and
losses. The brigade was also made responsible for "unified distribution" of its income. These provisions nullified the earlier and largely inoperative provision that the commune would be responsible for the profit and loss of all subordinate units. Economically, the commune was redefined as an association of its component production brigades which were characterized as "independent units of management." It possessed the authority to lead, suggest, recommend, and consult, but not to "coerce" the brigades. It was permitted to draw a certain amount of money from the public accumulation funds of the brigades, but this power was to be used sparingly if at all during the next few years. In any event, the amount drawn would have to be approved by the county government.

The revised draft of the same document, adopted in September 1962, went even further, lowering the basic unit of account to the production team level; the team was made responsible for its own profits and losses. (It was provided, however, that "with the consent of the masses" certain brigades could continue to be basic accounting units.) In addition, the commune and the brigade were instructed in general not to draw public accumulation and welfare funds from the teams or to take away their labor power, draft animals, and farm tools. The revised draft made provision for a form of two-level ownership; however, in this case the two levels were to be the commune and the team rather than the commune and the brigade. The provisions of the revised "Draft Resolution" may be understood as in effect giving formal sanction to some of the actual arrangements which had emerged anyway in various communes since 1961. At the same time, they did not give blanket approval to all local practices but reflected also the endeavor of the Party center to interdict or reverse other developments such as the household production contract system (baochan dao hu) and the system of "responsibility field" (zeren tian).

Thus within four years after the dramatic beginning of the commune system, the structure of ownership, organization of management, and intracommunal financial responsibility had in both central policy and local practice shifted significantly to smaller, lower level, and highly localized units of collective production. The commune and the production brigade lost many of their previous powers
in accounting and management. Viewed in this historical context, the pattern followed in Dazhai represents in retrospect a striking contrast. For in moving at this time to enhance the position of the production brigade in accordance with the central government's policies, it also adopted specific practices which went beyond them. Afterwards, it continued to adhere to both the basic change and the specific practices in face of an opposite general trend.

(b) Ownership and management in Dazhai and Xiyang: against the trend. Dazhai had always played an activist role in earlier movements toward collective political-economic arrangements (with a striking exception in the radical first year of the commune period). The village began cooperativization rather early in the winter of 1952, and by the winter of 1954, all seventy-odd households were incorporated into a lower stage agricultural producer's cooperative. Dazhai rapidly transformed itself into a higher stage cooperative in the winter of 1955-1956. With implications perhaps for future experiments, during this transformation Dazhai, Wujiaping, and Gaojialing villages were all merged into one higher stage coop. The next year, apparently at the instigation of the more naturally well-endowed Wujiaping, the enlarged cooperative fragmented, and the three former lower level cooperatives regained separate identities, but this time as higher level cooperatives.

Since 1955, the Dazhai cooperative was divided into two production teams and this continued after Dazhai gained production brigade status within the new commune in 1958. As was the case in many places, the relationship between Dazhai brigade and its teams had been defined by the mutual obligations of the "four fixed" (si guding)—(fixed amounts of land, labor, draft animals, and farm tools given by brigade to team for their own use)—and "three guarantees and one bonus" (sanbao yijiang) i.e., labor-production-cost contract with rewards and penalties. This relationship was the structural heart of the brigade-team system.

In 1960, Dazhai made an eventful decision to eliminate the production team as a level of economic management by abolishing the systems of sanbao yijiang and "the four-fixed." The brigade began directly to manage agri-
cultural production and undertook "unified accounting" for the whole village. To be sure, Dazhai's decision to make the brigade the basic accounting unit appeared to be nothing more than a local implementation of the national policy embodied in the resolution of September 1959 and the subsequent emergency directive. But the abolition of sanbao yijiang and si guding went beyond any provision in the above documents including those in the August 1958 resolution. Furthermore, the sanbao yijiang system was strongly advocated by the government at this time (Crook, 1970: 360). And when the contemporary situation of the Dazhai commune is taken into account, the singular prominence of Dazhai's brigade organization following this decision appears even greater. For in contrast to several highly popularized cases, the communes in Xiyang county apparently never became basic units of account, not to say sole owners of all means of production. None of the commune and brigade cadres in Xiyang interviewed in 1977 could recall a time when their respective communes had functioned as basic accounting units responsible for profits and losses of subordinate levels. Thus, with the management function of the teams eliminated in 1960, the brigade at Dazhai became the only unit whose decisions directly affected production and distribution in the village under the drastically weakened overall authority of the commune.

Dazhai continued in 1962 and afterward to carry out a policy that ran counter to the national trend toward team-level accounting which was sanctioned in the September 1962 document. It appears that during these years in Xiyang county as elsewhere, the basic accounting function was shifted to the team. Among the 13 brigades (other than Dazhai) surveyed, only the Hexi brigade of Chengguan commune had successfully "resisted" the demands of the Xiyang Party committee between 1961 and 1963 to adopt team-level advertising. However, even Hexi did not go as far as Dazhai; in contrast, it retained both the "four fixed" and "three fixed target" systems in its brigade-team relations although the "bonus" portion of the latter system was abolished. These changes endured for half a decade, with the exception of Wujiaping discussed immediately below.

Mao's call in 1964 for the entire nation to learn from Dazhai in agriculture suggested an upgrading of the position of the brigade in political status if not in the
system of ownership and accounting. In the immediate Dazhai vicinity halting steps to transform the ownership system began in neighboring units. Most probably on Chen Yong-gui's initiative in 1965 following several years of on-and-off but intense political struggle in Xiyang county, the Dazhai and Wujiaping brigades formed a "joint brigade" (liandui) with a single Party branch. The two brigades, however, remained separate economic units. Chen served as secretary of the Party committee of the general Party branch of the joint brigade, while Li Xi-shen, former secretary of Wujiaping brigade's original Party branch, acted as secretary of the Wujiaping Party subbranch (fenzhi). In 1966, Wujiaping brigade abolished its six production teams as basic accounting units thus becoming the first Xiyang brigade to follow Dazhai's example. The six production teams were replaced by three teams which functioned simply as units for organizing production.

Still in existence today, this system in Wujiaping assigns the three teams a fixed number of workers and the use of set amounts of land, animals, and farm tools (analogous to the "four fixed" system) with the proviso that the brigade has the ultimate authority to make necessary changes. As in Dazhai, the system of "three fixed targets and one bonus" has been discontinued. The production teams cultivate the land assigned to them with seed, fertilizer, and pesticides supplied by the brigade which also owns and controls the use of available farm machinery. All collective income goes to the brigade for "unified distribution."

One notes with interest that Dazhai found it possible as early as 1960 to abolish sanbao yijiang and súnging and since 1961 to maintain the brigade as the basic accounting unit against the national and local trends. Available data does not allow for a precise explanation of this achievement, but several contextual and historical factors may be suggested. One factor in the immediate situation is that Mao and the Party center were placing increasing importance on the production brigade in 1960 (though in terms of a downward trajectory from the commune) precisely when Dazhai was considering the first round of changes. At the moment this emphasis may have functioned as a justification for Dazhai's decision. Second, of considerable importance in filling out the political/ideological explanations often advanced for Dazhai's radical initiatives, was Dazhai's marked economic achievement during the crucial 1958-1962 period. The critical point
is that Dazhai's decision to go against the ongoing policy trend was solidly grounded in economic achievement. The political inspiration was there surely, but it would be abstract and sensationally idealistic to separate political initiatives from material bases in explaining this process.\textsuperscript{1} Third, both Dazhai and Party Secretary Chen were by this time models with some substantial support in the district and province. In becoming so, they also had a substantial history of combating trends and even authoritative decisions when these seemed to counter their perceived interests. Their political history undoubtedly was a conditioning factor toward making a decision of this nature (Meisner, 1977, 1978). Finally, as Meisner also suggests, there existed in Dazhai internal political and social prerequisites for a drastic change such as strong, united brigade-level leadership groups and a sense of community among brigade members, bound together by a habit of acting and thinking collectively, or to use the much-abused term, a high level of political consciousness. Beyond these specific conditions, the question remains as to whether other special cultural, geographical, structural, or economic circumstances might have made the Dazhai situation atypical. This is a fundamental question which can be answered only after we have studied the Dazhai case more thoroughly and compared it with other cases, particularly those in which attempts to establish the brigade as the basic accounting unit failed or were aborted.

Despite the stirrings of change in 1965, little happened across the board in Xiyang to transform the ownership system until the Cultural Revolution triggered considerable rearrangement of political power in the county. In spring 1967, Chen Yong-gui set up a "revolutionary rebellion headquarters" and seized power from the old Xiyang Party committee and county government. Chen became the head of a new revolutionary committee and also a nuclear Party leadership group.\textsuperscript{14} In 1967 and 1968, all the remaining 11 brigades visited in 1977 became basic accounting units and, according to Chen Yong-gui, all brigades in Xiyang did so as well.

Whatever the mixture of conditions that may have promoted rapid, successful adoption of brigade-level accounting and two-level ownership in Xiyang after 1967,
that system continued more the exception than the rule in China at large. It is general knowledge that in the next two or three years, the movement to learn from Dazhai was invigorated; and the system of brigade-level accounting was considered in many localities to be a major element in the Dazhai model. But in practice, there soon turned out to be significant obstacles to change in most Chinese localities. Often the brigade was too large or unwieldy a unit (averaging more than 200 households and dispersed within either a very large natural village or a number of smaller ones). In addition, in many brigades the requisite leadership, political and social solidarity, maturity, and consciousness (as ascribed above to Dazhai) did not exist.

At various times, the system in Dazhai itself was attacked by opponents as "transcending a specific historical stage" and reflecting a desire to bring about communism "in one morning." On December 26, 1971, the Party center reiterated the policy of using the team as the basic unit of account. In almost all localities the process of transforming the brigade into the basic accounting unit was halted or reversed. In the brigades visited in Xiyang county itself, this reversal did not by all accounts happen. But in the Zhangchuan commune of Pingding county bordering on Xiyang, all brigades that had been made basic units of account reverted in 1972 to the earlier accounting system (which was originally adopted almost everywhere at various times between 1961 and 1963). Special material conditions may have played a role in the regression in Zhangchuan which happened to coincide with an extremely serious drought that had struck the southern part of Pingding county and a large part of Xiyang as well. If the harshness of the drought was an important factor in institutional change, it is notable that the peasants and cadres of Zhangchuan and Xiyang reacted in very different ways. However, in the main we must recognize that beyond any immediate pressures from vagaries of the natural environment, regime policy in 1972 and years following favored the maintenance of team-level accounting. In adhering to the brigade-level ownership system, Xiyang cadres faced a general policy made even weightier by the difficult material conditions brought about by record drought.
In the current movement to establish Dazhai-type counties, the system of making the brigade the basic unit of account is not included in the six criteria for identifying a Dazhai-type county. But at the 1975 conference, then Vice-Premier Hua Guo-feng also reaffirmed the goal of gradual transition to the system of ownership with "brigade or even commune" as the basic unit of account when conditions were ripe (Quandang dongyuan, 1975:25). At the 1976 conference, Vice Premier Chen Yong-gui urged the rapid development of the economy at the commune and brigade level to create the conditions for gradual transition (Chedi pipan, 1977: 42). In the summer of 1977, cadres in the Dazhai commune were seriously discussing not only the possibility of making the Dazhai commune the basic unit of account but also such specific problems as the rationalization of land use and the adoption of a wage system for agricultural workers on a commune-wide basis. From specific beginnings in Dazhai in 1961 to partial transformation in the mid-1960s and then fully developed county-wide institutional change after 1967-1968, the establishment of increasingly centralized structures in rural political economy weathered many trying political and economic shifts. The pattern of change suggests a kind of "radical lag" phenomenon in which a combination of economic, political, and ideological factors make it possible for certain localities that have made major innovations during a period of general radical transformation to ignore or withstand subsequent system pressures toward retrenchment or "consolidation" during conservative periods, suggesting a sort of "two steps forward, no steps back" counterpoint to the more usual two forward one backward procession. Thus, places like Dazhai and Xiyang may remain visible signposts of radical promise for future periods if and when the pace of transformation picks up once again. In that event, the question of whether the material and political conditions in various localities permit or prevent the adoption of the Dazhai system of accounting will again become crucial, just as it was between 1968 and 1971. Alternatively, and perhaps more likely in the near future, there will emerge throughout the length and breadth of China with its great variation in local conditions a large number of submodels within the six, broad, general guidelines of the Dazhai-type county. If so, many of the specific institutional
arrangements developed in Dazhai and Xiyang, but not included in the six criteria, could then mark Dazhai as a celebrated model at one end of a wide spectrum of institutions and practices of varying degrees of radicalism and conservatism. Most probably, the future contains a wider range of possibilities than we can envisage at this time.

(2) Collectivizing private plots. In addition to revising the accounting unit, Dazhai and Xiyang have carried out other important changes in the systems of ownership and distribution. Among these was the decision first made in Dazhai to bring private plots back into the collective. There, the move came on the heels of the disastrous summer flood of 1963 in which 22% of the collective land as well as many private plots were inundated and a large percentage of privately owned homes and utility buildings damaged or destroyed. According to recent official account, 97% of the brigade members suggested that private plots be returned to the brigade so that the land could be rebuilt and cultivated according to unified plan (Dazhai jingyan, 1977: 18). Whatever the nature of leader-mass interaction in making this major decision, the plan must have been appealing insofar as it obviated the conflicts of interest likely to arise over whose private plots would be rebuilt in what order. Adding to incentives of economic rationalization and fairness, the brigade also compensated brigade members for losing private plots by giving thirty jin of grain per person in the initial year of 1964. The brigade also supplied its members with vegetables. Since then, increases in collective output have provided more than sufficient grain per capita, thus making superfluous the specific provision regarding compensatory grain supply.

In a gradual process mainly between 1967 and 1970, other brigades in Xiyang county followed suit in incorporating private plots into the collective economy. In 1965 or 1966, Wujiaping was the first to abolish private plots. In the other Xiyang brigades a determined but apparently careful and flexibly organized process of collectivization ensued after Cultural Revolution-inspired change in county leadership. Some examples turned up during the 1977 visit illuminate this history.

In Dongyetou, commune transformation involved two
markedly uneven steps: in 1968, some 95% of the households turned over their private plots to the brigades. The next year the remaining five percent followed the example of the overwhelming majority. In Sandu commune, the Party committee secretary emphasized that local brigades had followed the principle of voluntary action in eliminating the private sector of the land. In many Sandu brigades, the process involved three steps and took three years to complete. In 1968, one-third of the households turned over their private plots, followed by one-third more in each of the two succeeding years. In exchange, the brigades promised to solve problems of household vegetable supply and as in Dazhai to give them additional grain allotments in thirty jin per person—not a great amount perhaps, but sufficient to convey a sense of communal concern for family well-being during the proposed transition.

The relatively protracted nature of the changeover in Sandu commune may be understood in reference to prevailing material conditions. Sandu had been one of the poorest communes in the county. In 1966, its teams fell 300,000 jin short of their 1,100,000 jin grain sales target. Also in 1966, the government found it necessary to remit 200,000 jin of grain to some teams in order to insure at least 300 jin per person. This amount plus the 40 or 50 additional jin per person produced on private plots barely met the state-established minimum standard for grain consumption in this area. Because of the critical increment of food supply produced on private plots, peasants in Sandu may have been more anxious about the prospect of giving up private plots than those of Dongyetou commune, for example, a relatively wealthy unit located along the largest river in Xiyang.

Altogether, the variations in the experiences in Dazhai, Wujiaping, Sandu, Dongyetou, and other places in Xiyang indicate a pattern of flexibility and caution among brigade and commune cadres in carrying into practice the county-directed policy of collectivizing private plots. The program reflected a desire to minimize coercive measures with material inducements, a measured pace of change, and demonstration by example that the problems created by the abolition of private plots could be resolved in a fair and practical manner.
Collective pig husbandry. In 1958, a major up-roar had taken place when officials in Chengguan commune, of which Dazhai was then one of sixty-odd brigades, decided to appropriate part of the pigs raised in Dazhai and other villages in order to set up a "10,000 pig sty," a practice widespread at the time and later much criticized. The attempt was vigorously resisted by Dazhai's leadership and resented widely by other units (in which resistance was not, however, as active and open as it might have been). The commune pig enterprise was abandoned in 1959 after a life of only three months.

But in 1977 and for many years preceding, pigs in Dazhai brigade itself were collectively owned and reared. In this practice Dazhai is unique. All other brigades visited had both private and public pig-rearing. In 1975, informants stated, two-thirds of all Xiyang swine were raised collectively; the remaining were in private hands. In 1977, officials in two brigades mentioned plans afoot to build new pigpens that would supplant the need for any private pig raising. A rapid increase in pig production at minimized costs has high priority for a number of reasons. The method of collective pig raising is being adopted only insofar as it contributes to achieving that specific goal in a practical way (rather than for broad ideological or symbolic purposes). Furthermore, it is interesting that in Xiyang brigades (other than Dazhai) a method has been found that bypasses the link between the home-rearing of pigs and the now nonexistent cultivation of private plots that had in the past been the major and customary sources of fodder.16

The Dazhai system of labor remuneration. This section brings us to a second theme--changes in the system of distribution (and tangentially in the organization of agricultural work). In tandem with the major shifts in ownership and management structures that occurred in 1960, Dazhai brigade began a series of important revisions toward a new and now famous system of labor remuneration known as "self-assessment and public discussion" (zibao gongyi).

By the early 1960s, the system of payment at Dazhai had evolved from the "fixed [basic] work points [for a person] plus flexible appraisal [of a specific day's work]"
(si fen huo ping) procedure that prevailed under the coope-
tratives through "appraisal in the field of [a persons']
work" (ditou pinggong), to "management according to a fixed
norm" (ding e guanli) and "payment according to piece work"
(anjian jigong; Dazhai jingyan, 1977: 115-117). According
to Chen Yong-gui, there were 130 to 140 different kinds
of farm tasks in what was essentially a piece work system.
After the disastrous flood in 1963, the brigade extended
to all types of farm work the system of "self-assessment
and public discussion" which had been adopted in 1960 for
"farmland capital construction" and "general farm work."
Again, this decision was made when the government urged,
through official articles, the production teams to utilize
labor norms and piece work (Crook, 1970: 367). The emer-
gency provided the occasion for the abandonment of the
system of ding e guanli and anjian jigong. A fundamental
reason for this change was, Chen explained, that it was
impossible for him and other cadres to handle the adminis-
trative burden of the complicated norm system. "It caused
too much trouble." Educational level was too low, and
cadres could not do all the calculations. By giving up the
system of payment according to fixed norms and piece work,
he said, and adopting a simple system that relied on the
honesty and maturing "socialist ideas" of the brigade mem-
bers, the cadres could spend most of their time in actual
farm work alongside the peasants and thus raise their
enthusiasm for labor.

As the new system emerged, since 1960, a meeting for
"self-assessment and public discussion" to determine the
work value of an individual's standard labor day took place
every day or every other day, then every ten days to half
a month; later, once a month, and still later, once every
three months. In 1968, the present practice of annual
meetings was adopted. In recent years, the meeting has
usually lasted two evenings—the first for self-assessments
followed by a general discussion and conferences in small
groups. The second evening is occupied by a summary of
the results of the previous evening's small group deliber-
ations and another round of general discussion. It was
learned in the interviews that as years have passed, the
formal role played by the revolutionary committee has dimin-
ished and also that voting on each individual determination
no longer takes place. Is this last fact the product of a process by which a sense of standards and confidence in the continuing performance of fellow members have become ingrained in the Dazhai community? Or alternately, does it represent a diminution of democratic participation as a result of ritualization or routinization of the procedure whatever the existing state of consciousness? Such questions of interest to scholars are hard to answer.

In other brigades and communes visited, the system of self-assessment and public discussion was adopted at various times between 1965 and 1970. As in other matters, Wujiaping was the first unit to do so on the basis of its association with Dazhai in the joint brigade. In contrast, Sandu commune completed the transition to the Dazhai system in its brigades in 1970.

The frequency of assessment and discussion meetings also varies from unit to unit. Some brigades such as Wujiaping, Nannao, and Shiping, like Dazhai, hold a meeting once a year. At the other extreme, Liu Zhuang brigade, which is an advanced unit economically, but has a complicated history of intravillage political conflict, reverted in the past two years to holding monthly meetings. In Dazhai's neighboring Houzhuang brigade, where published accounts state it has followed a tortuous course in learning from Dazhai, meetings are held twice a year. In Dongyetou commune, centered around one of the four major market towns (zhen) in Xiyang, most brigades use a once-a-quarter system. In Sandu commune, work points are determined once a year in those six of its 18 brigades that are characterized as politically advanced units, once every three months in another third, once a month in the remainder. In Sandu the process of self-assessment and public discussion lasts three evenings in the best of the brigades that do it annually and at least five or six evenings in the others.

Once again in examining Xiyang county interview data, this time with respect to the evolving system of labor remuneration, one can see that the gradual process of extending the Dazhai-type system has been handled with extreme care and flexibility. Variations of method and timing from brigade to brigade show a cautious management of change based on attention to concrete capacities and potentials.

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They also suggest that political relationships between the county and the brigades may be quite complex and marked by a measure of reciprocal influence. Unlike what may easily be assumed, the nature of change in the method of labor remuneration bears little resemblance to the method of launching a "campaign" though it surely is the result of the deliberate implementation of overall policy.

(5) Self-assessment and public discussion in grain distribution. The "Dazhai work point system" of labor remuneration has attracted widespread attention and been subject to controversial interpretation among Western commentators interested in China's rural transformation. An analogous system of "self-assessment and public discussion" pertaining to grain distribution has by contrast gone almost unnoticed. This is an ironic reflection on the perspective from outside, because in all brigades visited, cadres talked about the latter system with great pride. Although brigade members must still pay for distributed grain, cadres obviously consider the system to be an indication of success in achieving abundant grain supply.

The present method is the offspring of a system followed in the early 1960s in Dazhai in which the total distribution of grain for each brigade member was divided into two portions according to separate criteria. One was the "basic grain ration" (jiben kouliang) distributed according to a fixed scale of age rations in which children from one to three years received 30% of the full adult ration and those between four and six got 80%. The second portion was based on the number of points earned (gong fen kouliang).

In 1967, when Dazhai's grain production had surpassed 900 jin/mu—a striking achievement—the brigade adopted the present system. No part of the total grain distribution is based on work points earned. All distributed grain is considered to be a basic grain ration available according to need. Now it is a fact that some units in other parts of China have adopted a system of 100% jiben kouliang distribution, but Dazhai's procedure is innovative in one important respect. While in other cases it is customary to distribute all the grain according to fixed ratios by age (like Dazhai's past practice),
in present-day Dazhai 100% of the grain is "basic grain ration" but it is distributed according to a self-assessment and public discussion process similar to that used for labor-day valuation. This method, though it replaces an objective (age ratios) standard with a much more subjective one, is more economical in operation, Dazhai cadres believe, because it allows for more precise determination of grain allocation by need. Dazhai cadres made several points: first, the change signified a movement from food distribution according to "need and work" to distribution according to "need" alone. Second, the change was possible because of a great increase in grain output: it became relatively easy to meet self-assessment claims without the uncomfortably rigorous judgments characteristic of a condition of scarcity. Finally, the sense of an implicit understanding helped bolster community conviction that public trust would not be violated: people would not lay claim to extra grain on the basis of need and then sell it on an outside uncontrolled market.

Other brigades in Xiyang began to adopt the new system in 1968, though not all of them moved at the same speed. Yanz-huangwo brigade did not practice the zibao gongyi system in grain distribution until 1972, four years after the same method had been adopted for work point distribution. In general, brigades for which information is available did not take up the new system until grain output had reached at least 700 or 800 jin/mu and both private plots and the free market in grain had been eliminated. And when brigades adopted the new system, the incidence of formal institutional controls was somewhat heavier than in the case of labor remuneration. Revolutionary committees in the various brigades clearly play more active roles in grain distribution, and in some cases it was explicitly stated that the result of the public discussion was subject to final approval by the revolutionary committee. In contrasting the two areas in which the procedure of self-assessment and public discussion is used, the larger degree of formal control in grain distribution may in part be a function of the utter novelty of the system. It may also reflect a propensity surviving from more difficult days to hoard grain beyond the amount necessary for the year's consumption, the continuing symbolic importance of grain in perceptions about
village and household economies, and fears among cadres that surplus grain allocated for consumption might indeed help condition the re-creation of profit-seeking trade in this vital good.19

(6) The "new village": changes in spatial and residential patterns. In a reform once again pioneered in Dazhai brigade, collectively owned housing is beginning to appear in some Xiyang county villages. A change that denotes both ownership transformation (from private to public construction and ownership of family dwellings) and alteration of the distribution system (since housing now becomes a collectively distributed good), new houses are allocated to brigade members for household use in exchange for an annual charge of "repair fees." In Dazhai, where a new housing complex was constructed as a creative response to community-wide devastation wrought by the August 1963 flood, the repair fee is five yuan per year. The system is a sharp break with the past and still prevalent practice of private rural home building and ownership. In the old Xiyang residence pattern adapted to the natural setting, "cave-dwellings" were scattered here and there to take advantage of the contours of the loess hills. In precipitous twisted mountain areas, people were often clustered into series of small hamlets in separated hollows and hillsides. Today, the new housing developments are grouped together in one area, and the projects are known as "new villages."

The construction of "new villages" has led to important changes in neighborhood patterns and in the relationship between residence and land-use planning. In Dazhai, the "new village" has made the brigade into a tighter residential unit than before. Wujiaping brigade was originally made up of three natural villages occupied by three different lineages (and known for contentious inter-lineage relations). One of the three natural villages was separated from the other two by a wide gully. In Wujiaping today, construction of a "new village" has linked the two proximate natural villages together and has created enlarged housing space adequate for all three groups. Perhaps as a major step toward improving group relations, the three lineages were assigned new houses in a way that intermingled them as next-door neighbors. The change in Nannao brigade has been even more dramatic. The 65 house-
holds live in two closely located groups of houses that together form one "new village."

The old residential patterns can still be seen in Mengshan brigade, which is located in the highest, most mountainous area in Dazhai commune. This brigade of 130 households consists of 35 natural hamlets ranging from two households to 40, scattered over an area 15 li long and eight li wide. The largest hamlet has been built into a "new village" that houses the brigade headquarters, the supply and marketing cooperative, brigade enterprises, and new dwellings for members. With its highest mountain at an elevation of 1,327 meters, Mengshan brigade since 1975 has been implementing a program of planting 1,300,000 trees. When these trees mature, it can afford to abandon the tiny plots of cultivated land carved out on the side of the mountain near the small hamlets. The settlement pattern can then be changed.

In a few places in other communes visited, small brigades have been incorporated into a larger brigade. Upon completion of the construction of a "new village," plans are to abandon the old natural villages. This will be done, for example, in several of the 14 brigades along the Qiaojiayu gully in Dongyetou commune. In Dazhai commune, three mergers of brigades took place in the last three years, reducing the number of brigades from 23 to 19, although in these cases organizational changes were not accompanied by residential restructuring. Dazhai commune is now a mixture of village types: most brigades are based in natural villages, several are reconstructed "new villages," and others consist of more than one natural village. Of the "new villages," Dazhai, Wujiaping, and Nannao are the well-known examples while Mengshan, Longfengbo, Jinggou, and Honglian fall into the last category.

(7) Rationalizing population-land patterns. In a number of instances in recent years, commune organization has been able to alter aspects of village population-to-land relations in order to consolidate or otherwise rationalize land utilization and planning. For example, in 1975 Dazhai commune suggested to Yanzhuangwo brigade that it transfer to Mengshan brigade 120 of its 1,200 mu of land which are far from the Yanzhuangwo headquarters but closer to Mengshan and geographically part of it. The idea was
subsequently carried out. There is also one case in which Dazhai commune moved thirty-odd households from three poor brigades to the commune-operated farm to help cultivate a 500 mu parcel of newly reclaimed land and raise from 34 to 72 the number of households in Gaojialing, the natural village which is the site of the farm. Thus, a degree of rationalization of the land-population ratio, long recognized as a problem, is beginning to take place.22

As the communes have achieved greater organizational effectiveness and legitimacy, the boundaries of the "natural villages" are no longer sacrosanct. In this respect the present situation in Dazhai commune differs from that of the neighboring Pingding county, where spatial/residence factors hinder changes in the ownership structure. In 1976 Pingding was designed a Dazhai-type county and county Party secretary Li Suo-shou, former Party branch secretary of Nanao brigade promoted to Pingding leadership in October 1975, was given credit for the rapid progress. By 1977, 87% of the 324 brigades in Pingding had become basic accounting units. Explaining why teams are still basic accounting units in the remaining forty-some brigades, the vice-secretary of the county Party committee said that it was because the peasants in those brigades live in widely dispersed areas.

Conclusion

Among the various new institutional arrangements in Dazhai and Xiyang surveyed here, basic accounting at the brigade level and the two-level system of ownership are viewed by participants not only as central features of collective economy but also as strategic breakthroughs that made possible important subsequent changes. We do not pretend to know whether a three-level ownership system given the same access to capital and other inputs and accompanied by complementary policies and practices could achieve similar or even better results in agricultural production or other developmental tasks. With regard to Xiyang county as a whole, as in the earlier case of Dazhai, we must also admit our inability at this stage of research to specify definitively the cultural, geographical, structural, or economic circumstances that contributed to the adoption of the series of innovations described above. But we would
like to list some (although undoubtedly not all) historical and environmental factors that should be taken into account in examining the movement to learn from Dazhai and to build Dazhai-type counties, particularly in considering the transferability of those innovations adopted in Dazhai and Xiyang but not included in the six criteria for identifying the Xiyang-type counties as laid down in Hua's report in October 1975. These may be understood as factors that either represent favorable conditions for adoption of such institutional reforms, denote the absence of hindrances to their adoption, or imply the rationality of such changes.

First, Xiyang county contained many guerrilla and base areas during the Sino-Japanese war. The heritage of revolutionary experience in people's war, as well as in the early-completed land reform, must have had some effect on the quality and availability of activists and leaders for later institutional development. Second, Xiyang was by and large a poor area in which crops such as corn, gaoliang, and millet were (and continue to be) the principle grains, while wheat, the highly prized food grain in North China, constituted only a small portion of all the cereal grown. Commerce was less developed than in many other counties in China or even in the neighboring county of Pingding. Major cities are quite far away; the county seat was a small periodic market town with a population of slightly over 10,000 even at the present time which includes 3,000 peasants and their dependents. Commercial undertakings were arduous and less profitable than in many other regions. Third, this relative poverty and low level of development also found expression in village economies in which there were no industrial crops or household commercial products of any significance. In the Xiyang villages, sideline occupations were poorly developed until pushed by collective efforts. Fourth, spatial and demographic factors may have made a difference. Xiyang communes have on the average only 11,000 persons; and brigades, 486. (The national averages are 15,000 and 1,000 respectively.) Furthermore, natural villages are small, situated far apart, and in most cases separated by hills and gullies. It certainly must have helped in the early implementation of brigade-level accounting at Dazhai that the brigade was a natural village with a small population.
Once this model was developed, it could be adapted with necessary adjustments to villages of slightly different sizes and types. In such cases as Nannao and Wujiaping, the power of the brigades to regroup and rationalize residence and land use has demonstrated its effectiveness. Fifth, certain ecological factors may also have made a difference. For example, the frostless growing season is short, a matter of 110 to 170 days. This makes it economically feasible to mobilize the peasants during a relatively large part of the year to take part in farmland capital construction, water conservancy, and other projects that create preconditions for agricultural development, and again, provides a rationale for and bolsters the effectiveness of brigade-centered economic leadership. In addition, stone used in building embankments in gullies and along rivers as well as new cave dwellings and houses is readily available in nearby hills and mountains. It could be exploited without massive modern inputs, provided there is an effective leadership and organization to mobilize the peasants.

With these specific historical and material conditions in mind, an outside observer does not find it too difficult to share Vice-Premier Chen Yong-gui's conviction that basic accounting at the brigade level has been one of the two or three most significant factors in the overall transformation of agriculture in Xiyang. Attempting to understand the concrete situations and practical problems as the participants themselves understood them, but at the same time looking at their experience from a larger perspective, one can quite easily detect a possible relation of brigade-centered institutional change to one of the most basic, long-standing, and dynamic factors affecting the potential for development in the rural sector: the relative capacity of rural communities to maximize the allocation of labor power to agricultural tasks (particularly capital farmland construction and infrastructural improvements in the initial phase in Dazhai and Xiyang). The problem of labor availability and commitment to rural economy is an historical problem reaching back into the penetration of commercial influence into the countryside, the deterioration or stagnation of rural living conditions, (at least among groups in some localities), and the flow of people and resources to the
urban sector in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It has taken on new dimensions following the restoration of the agrarian economy after land reform and cooperativization as the collective model of production provides new opportunities for the rationalization and modernization of production and improvement of rural standards of living. The structural and administrative reforms strengthening the relative position of the production brigade in the commune and otherwise revising distribution systems and residence patterns constituted an important step toward solving the historical problem of outflow of labor, for which the 1957 and 1958 regulations of migration to cities provided only part of the remedy. It counteracted tendencies in both collective units and individual households to maintain income by investing labor outside the collective agricultural sector and especially away from the basic area of grain and food-stuff production. In the long run, it may turn out to be an initial step toward ameliorating the great division between town and countryside.

In Dazhai and Xiyang, brigade-level accounting was followed by more specialized and effective use of available resources including land, as well as the investment of a larger proportion of the surplus in production, capital construction, and economic diversification. In addition, greater responsibility and resources for decisions concerning livelihood vested in the brigade may have increased the ability of the collective unit to stand behind the individuals and households during periods of risk entailed by collective innovation. This feeling of security must have helped the peasants to overcome their traditional aversion to risk-taking. Moving accounting from team to brigade reduced administrative personnel and costs and allowed cadres to take part more actively in labor and to supervise farm work more directly than before.

Political factors related to economic management must also be taken into account. Organizational transformation in Chinese rural economy, especially at basic levels, involves a tight combination of administrative, political, and social, as well as strictly economic, considerations. In Dazhai and Xiyang, concentration of economic power at brigade rather than team level vests greater authority for economic decision making in the same organizational unit in which the Communist Party branch is located. This
change is analogous to Mao's early decision in his program of army-building to establish the Party branch at the company level. These organizations are the key leadership groups in the political networks which maintain close links with the masses and govern the life of rural communities. Insofar as concentrating economic powers at the brigade level ties economic management more closely to Party power and ideological leadership, it also hinders the expression of localized or divisive interests through the modality of team organization. In a situation lacking institutional form for special interests to wield countervailing power, new programs of economic development can get underway more easily. The policy has also served to locate increased economic responsibilities in what are presumed to be the more experienced and highly qualified basic-level leaders. Finally, if the brigade has gained legitimacy and experience in the management of various accounting unit responsibilities, its activity in other controversial areas of economic leadership such as abolishing private plots or limiting labor outflow might be more compelling to brigade members.

Institutional reorganization may well have been a major component in the solution to these major challenges that understandably rests on stimulating the overall viability of the agrarian collectives as sources of regularly increasing income and hope for a better material future for the peasant community. In addition, there is a political side to the issue in terms of the need to mobilize rural producers to take active and committed roles in developing production within a socialist form. In this sense as well, the problem has been to find an organizational unit large enough to possess necessary political resources and leadership but close enough to the grassroots community to work with the peasants, keep in touch with their sentiments, and permit a sense of participation to develop. Obviously, the structural response to this question cannot be static over time, but in the 1960s and 1970s the production brigade in Xiyang has presented itself to the local leaders as having the highest potential.

From a sociological perspective, one may characterize the changes as moments in the creation of a new community based on "natural units" in the countryside that remain
after the destruction of the traditional class structure. They permit the continuing positive aspects of rural social ties to strengthen contemporary collective agricultural development. While experience suggests that the so-called "natural village" is the right unit to begin this process of reconstruction, the heavy investment being made in Xi-yang county development programs to adapt historical residential and settlement patterns into "new villages" is a striking indication of how far change has been pushed beyond the starting point. The history of the units surveyed suggests that an effective organization and strong, competent leadership at the county, commune, and brigade levels can succeed in making natural villages into even more tightly organized communities and merging scattered hamlets into new contiguous settlements. Are these in turn the more dynamic loci of socialist forms of institutional change?

Finally, it is important to remind ourselves of the essential necessities: throughout the process of institutional transformation, progress must be made in increasing the quantity and distribution of agricultural goods both to serve the needs of nation-wide economic sectors and to provide material proof of the desirability of making further commitment by rural producers to increase their communal endeavors. The attempt to strengthen the agricultural labor force and to build up rural communities, as well as the ability to transform those communities into types of structures and living arrangements, depends on maintaining a dependable and probably rising social-economic floor in the villages and the achievement of a level of economic equality above that of the present time or in historical memory.

In this report of our findings and thinking we have tried consciously to resist the temptation of making generalizations about rural development in China on the basis of the Dazhai-Xiyang experience. Thus, none of our statements should be interpreted as a discussion of the transferability of the many specific institutions and practices of Dazhai and Xiyang to other parts of China. But we do feel that in Xiyang, we have seen creative patterns of response to the problems and possibilities of transformation in rural institutions informed by Dazhai brigade's radical impetus in a series of very bold innovative moves.

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and then followed by a more deliberate, balanced, and well-articulated process of transforming the whole county. In this first part of the study, we have examined this experience to highlight some of the major moments of institutional change that are providing an operational frame for the economic undertakings whose strategic meaning has been noted above. In a succeeding presentation we shall take up the complex questions of economic growth and equality more directly. As these innovative responses have undoubt-edly led to the emergence of new problems and left some old problems incompletely resolved, the institutions and practices in Xiyang will continue to evolve in the context of changing national policies and priorities. This question will be discussed in our larger study of Xiyang county.

NOTES

1. This paper appeared in Modern China (Jan. 1979) which holds the copyright. We wish to thank the editors of Modern China for permission to include it in the Proceedings. Tang Tsou began preliminary research on the problem of equality in China through a grant from the Joint Committee on Contemporary China and the support of the Center for Far Eastern Studies and the Social Sciences Divisional Research Committee of the University of Chicago. Marc Blecher wants to acknowledge support received from Oberlin College. Mitch Meisner would like to acknowledge support received from the University of California at Santa Cruz, especially Merrill College, where much of his work on the manuscript was completed. In revising the manuscript for publication, the authors were greatly benefited by the helpful comments of Professors D. Gale Johnson, Peter Schran, John Starr, Philip Kuhn, William Parish, Christine Wong, Vivienne Shue, and Suzanne Pepper.

2. There is reason to believe that, at the time of Tsou's visit, a rough division of labor among the present Chinese leadership left Hua Guo-feng in personal charge of the sphere of policy and actions linked with agricultural development with Vice-Premier Chen Yong-gui, the former Dazhai brigade Party branch secretary, his deputy. Industry and overall planning were under the purview of Vice-
Chairman Li Xian-nian and Yu Jiu-li (elected to the Political Bureau in August 1977), and the controversial, difficult task of scientific, technological, educational reconstruction and the politically sensitive area of military affairs were in the province of Vice-Chairman Deng Xiao-ping.

3. See, for example, Pairault (1977).

4. Among the places visited were Dazhai, Nannao, Wujia-ping, and Shiping brigades, units seen previously by Tsou in October 1975. It was also made possible for him to stop in four communes and four brigades that once comprised the four major marketing towns in Xiyang county. Three of these, he was told, had never before been looked at by American academics in the course of research. Tsou also interviewed two present and one former leading cadres from Dazhai commune, knowledgeable respectively in areas of agricultural research and extension, commune industry, and the history of commune leadership. These latter discussions helped to fill out knowledge about Dazhai commune, which has long been considered by many students of China as an insignificant unit enjoying only a shadowy existence. In addition, he visited five other brigades in Dazhai commune and one other commune not the site of a periodic market and one brigade in that commune.

5. In hindsight at least, Chen attached great weight to that policy decision. He made this point in his characteristically forceful and straightforward manner.

6. According to a survey of a suburban commune of Beijing, more than 50% of the population in that commune would have received less income in 1958 if unified accounting and unified distribution of income by the commune had been carried out. As of 1958, this commune was divided into nine management zones with 14 units of accounts which were responsible for their own profits and losses (Renmin gongshe jingji, 1969: 190).

7. It can be argued that the provision regarding the commune's responsibility for profits and losses of all its constituent units made the commune the basic unit of
account. But this provision was never implemented in the seven communes visited.

8. The system of "sanding" is the same as "sanbao" except that the latter term implies a more reciprocal relationship between units at two different levels, whereas the former term suggests a more one-sided relationship under which the units at a lower level must guarantee the fulfillment of the targets.

9. More precisely, with brigade accounting as the foundation of the system of accounting.

10. As was the case everywhere, the communes in Xiyang county were so large when set up initially in 1958 that they were never viable units of production and distribution. In 1958 Xiyang county was divided into eight communes; seven of them were identical with the seven qu that had existed from 1950 to 1953, after one of the original eight qu was abolished. (The average size of a commune in Xiyang at that time was very roughly 225 square kilometers with a population of 20,000.) In 1959, what is presently Dazhai commune was detached from the Chengguan commune and became a separate unit. So was the Lijiazhuang commune in 1962. This contraction process produced 13 communes in 1959 and 20 communes in 1962. The number of communes in Xiyang has not changed since then.

11. The Hexi brigade was a relatively wealthy natural village at the doorstep of the county seat. One-fourth of its cultivated land was used to grow vegetables for the residents of the county seat.

12. Li Xi-shen was a commune cadre until 1962-1963 when Chen Yong-gui persuaded him to return to Wujiaping to deal with its many difficulties. He was successful after much initial trouble and later, having moved again from Wujiaping leadership to be secretary of the Gaoluo commune (Xiyang county) Party committee, Li was promoted in the early 1970s to be a county cadre. In 1976 or 1977, he succeeded Wang Jin-ce as deputy secretary of the Xiyang county Party committee. Since Chen Yong-gui, officially still the Xiyang county Party secretary, spends two-thirds
of his time either in Beijing or inspecting agricultural work throughout China, Li has effectively taken actual charge of the day-to-day affairs of Xiyang.

13. In 1959 and 1960, during the first two years of nationwide agricultural crises, Dazhai enjoyed two bumper harvests, producing 522,800 jin of grain in 1959 and 485,194 jin in 1960; this substantially surpassed the 1958 output of 417,040 jin. As far as could be ascertained from discussions during the visit to Dazhai, weather conditions during these two years in this part of Xiyang were not very bad. Rapidly rising output permitted Dazhai to sell 100,000 jin of fodder and hay at official prices during that time and lend 70,000 jin of grain to neighboring brigades. 1961 was apparently a bad year, even for Dazhai, and in none of the written sources is a figure for total grain output that year given. But in 1962, there was a remarkable recovery, Dazhai reaping a record bumper grain harvest of 551,225 jin. It cannot be ascertained whether the drop in production in 1961 was a result of the initial difficulties encountered in the elimination of the teams.

14. Chen Yong-gui was identified in 1963 as concurrently an alternate member of the Party committee of Xiyang county (Hongqi, 1963, nos. 13 and 14: 60; no. 5: 19).

15. Interestingly, Chen Yong-gui notes that in those six communes in Xiyang county most demoralized by drought conditions in which collective forms showed signs of tottering, the county Party committee took steps to shore up the situation by guaranteeing that every person in those communes would receive 460 jin of grain that fall whatever happened in the harvest (Union Research Service, 1974).

16. The brigade provides 60 jin of quality feed at 5.64 yuan to the peasants who sell their pigs to the supply and marketing cooperatives (Tsou, 1977). This is supplemented by bran received by the peasants when they process their grain at the brigade mills as well as weeds and grass (Communication from Peter Schran; Tsou, 1977). Locally, this traditional fodder is now called "cu si liao" or "coarse animal feed."
17. The system of ding e guanli was adopted by a cooperative in Shanxi as early as 1954 (Shanxi ribao, 1955: 2).

18. Yanzhuangwo brigade is formerly the site of Dazhai commune headquarters and before that was the location of the xiang (township) headquarters (xiang gongsuo). It was the site of the headquarters of the Dazhai commune until 1964-1965 when they were moved to the present location within the Dazhai brigade.

19. Possibly the cadres also fear that the peasants would misuse grains to feed private pigs. But this was not mentioned in the interviews.

20. By 1977, 200 out of 800 mu under grain crops had been converted to growing trees.

21. While the present communes are much smaller than the original qu, they are much larger than the xiang. After the qu system was replaced by the xiang system, a process which began in 1953, the present Dazhai commune then comprised five xiang: Wujiangping, Yanzhuangwo, Longfengbuo, Mengshan, and Hongjiaoguan. The names of four of these five xiang now refer to brigades, while Hongjiaoguan was the name of a brigade until two or three years ago when it was merged with two other brigades to form the Honglian brigade.

22. For example, a 1958 agricultural survey of Shanxi province noted that those areas which had the very lowest production levels were those with sparse population living in scattered villages on large and undeveloped pieces of land (Shanxi gongshe jingji diaocha, 1958: 108).

23. Gaoluo was the site of the East Xiyang government and the army headquarters of the forces commanded by the present Vice-Premier Chen Xi-lian, while Xizhai was the site of the West Xiyang government. Chen Yong-gui worked actively with the guerrilla forces.
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RURAL ELITES IN TRANSITION: CHINA'S CULTURAL CRISIS AND THE PROBLEM OF LEGITIMACY

By Guy S. Alitto

Disintegration of the political community in the first half of the twentieth century was one of several manifestations of China's profound cultural crisis: a prolonged agony (by no means yet over) unprecedented not only in China's own experience, but, because of China's unique historical development, unparalleled in world history. The disintegration of traditional systems—social, political, economic, technological, intellectual—was the ultimate cause of the rapid and far-reaching changes in all spheres of human activity. The rules of the political game were not completely gone, but there was a profusion of variations. Intellectuals of the time were well aware that they were living through a major cultural transition. The phrase (or variations thereof) "the old order is destroyed and a new one is not yet established" assumed the status of a cliché, and as such, indicated a universally shared assumption.

Quite naturally, then, a central and ubiquitous analytical concept that has informed many historical studies of the period has been "disintegration." Indeed, the standard textbook for the period is appropriately entitled China in Disintegration. I feel, however, that the actual extent of disintegration, particularly on the local rural level and in peripheral areas, is not apparent, even in studies analytically founded on a model of socio-political disintegration.

The disintegration of the traditional Chinese state and society has been described in many ways. One approach is based upon the concept of legitimacy. Again, it is my feeling that the implications of the sudden loss of legitimizing authority for the local rural areas have not been fully realized. For several millenia, the ultimate source of political legitimacy had been the cosmic order itself ("Heaven"), and from this source the "Caesar-Pope of the World"--the "Son of Heaven"--had dispensed legitimacy to power-holders and indirectly legitimized all hierarchies of the society.¹

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When the Son of Heaven departed from the scene for good in 1912, many Chinese welcomed it and were well prepared for it, but the majority of the rural population certainly were not. Indirectly, every individual's self-perception and perception of others, his place in, and understanding of, the order of things had been based upon the existence of the emperor. The one unvarying assumption about, and foundation of, all aspects of the political and social orders was gone. One is put in mind of the exchange between the young Russian atheist and the crusty old captain. The former had done his intellectual best to prove the non-existence of God. The captain's ultimate refutation seems to crystalize the process that must have taken place in many rural Chinese minds in the Republican period. Of course there is a God, the captain retorted. If there is no God, then how can I be a captain?

The masses of rural dwellers, of course, had never seen the emperor—any more than the captain had ever seen God—but the impact upon them of the Son of Heaven's demise must have been profound. The decapitation and deauthorization of all hierarchies threw them into a world without a universally accepted "authentic" authority. Contemporary observers throughout the period continue to report on rural "misunderstanding" of the Republic and popular yearning for the emergence of an "authentic" Son of Heaven, a final authority (chen-chu). Certainly the continued appearance in rural backwaters of new "Sons of Heaven" until well into the 1940s testifies to an anxious longing for his return.

A second consequence of the Dragon Throne's passing which had a profound effect on the local rural political world was the disappearance of any single criteria for political legitimacy. During the interregnum periods of China's imperial past, of course, legitimate status had been fluctuating and transient. Who had received the mandate of heaven might be indeterminate, and it was a truism that "He who succeeds becomes emperor; he who is defeated becomes [is regarded as] a bandit" (ch'eng wang pai k'ou). But there was always the unquestioned assumption that the issue of legitimacy would be settled once the identity of the authentic Son of Heaven was ascertained. Even during periods of rebellion and disorder within a dynasty—such as the nineteenth century and
Boxer rebellions—local elites frequently and easily changed from legitimized leaders to bandits and back. Nevertheless, there was one final and unvarying standard: those whom the throne or any imperial representative designated as illegitimate powerholders were illegitimate; those accorded legitimacy were legitimate regardless of their past or their actions. The same power-holder or group might be so legitimized or delegitimized several times, but the Son of Heaven's decision still provided an ultimate single criteria.

The Republic brought its own source of, and criteria for, legitimacy: The People. Without a centralized institutional structure through which to dispense this new legitimacy, however, it proved to be so subjective and fluid a standard as to be essentially meaningless. Until the creation of a centralized institutional structure in the 1950s—"the people's" government—there was no single standard of political legitimacy on the local level. In effect, if no one could be "authentically" legitimate by decision of a Son of Heaven, then any power-holder had a claim to legitimacy through the people and the presumed authority to designate any rival or antagonistic power-holder as illegitimate. Thus, since 1911, practically all power-holders were, at one time or another, designated by some other power-holder as that ultimate illegitimate wielder of power, the bandit (fei). The designation has been applied to all the well-known national or regional figures—Mao Tse-tung, Chiang Kai-shek, Yuan Shih-k'ai, Sun Yat-sen, the various warlords—and to various political parties and organizations. It was also applied to a great variety of local (county level and below) power-holders. "Central," provincial, and party army leaders—peripatetic but nevertheless "local" power-holders at any particular time and place—called each other bandits and were themselves so labeled by various other local power-holders.

A third aspect of legitimacy in the Republican period, one which distinguishes it absolutely from any other previous period of disorder and decentralization, was the emergence of nationalism. Although "the people" as the ultimate source of legitimacy could develop easily from many indigenous Chinese traditions including Confucianism ("Heaven sees and hears as the people see and hear"),
nationalism—the people embodied as nation-state—was entirely new. Moreover, modern nationalism was associated with many other nontraditional concepts, such as popular mobilization and economic development, which also affected the nature of legitimacy. Almost all power-holders at all levels were "nationalists," but until the founding of the People's Republic, there was no unified nation-state.

Although the Republic did not bring a centralized institutional structure to which local power-holders could relate, it did bring a proliferation of new legitimizing titles and designations associated with a modern nation-state. While Republican reality, especially at the local rural level, was extreme decentralization and even anarchy, local power-holders significantly chose to legitimize their positions and activities with those titles and terms associated with a nonexistent centralized nation-state. That they competed for these "prizes" indicated that all were vitally concerned with legitimacy itself and related it to a unified entity known as China.

One should note finally that although a centralized nation-state has created again a single objective standard for legitimacy, the underlying cultural crisis—which was the ultimate cause of the Republican crisis of legitimacy—continues. The basic cultural values and norms which are the ultimate criteria of what is "good" for "the people," and the precise determination of what is Chinese about "the people," are still in flux. Thus, the slippery new legitimacy of "the people" continues to produce new "bandits," most recently four principal ones.

The Wan-hsi area of southwest Honan. On July 19, 1931, in the small market town of Hou-chi in the fourth ward of Chen-p'ing county, Honan, a recently risen local power-holder named P'eng Yu-t'ing addressed the officers of the local militia. His topic was "local revolution" which, he explained:

Is the same thing as local self-government. How is that so? If we want to carry out local self-government we naturally cannot but get rid of all obstacles to local self-government. What are the obstacles to local self-government? We can roughly divide them into three categories: (1) bandit-style armies,
corrupt and rapacious government officials, and evil bandits.\(^5\)

Local self-government (of which he was the initiator in the area) and a local militia (of which he was the leader) were absolutely necessary, according to P'eng, for the welfare of "the people." In similar speeches to groups around the county during that time, he further expounded upon the enemies of the people and self-government. They included county magistrates, local bullies, local tyrants, local rascals, and evil gentry, all of whom cooperated with or were themselves bandits. They also included communist bandits (whose bandit activities were motivated by the ideal of making all Chinese into a "propertyless class"—(wu-ch'an chieh-chi); the Kuomintang (which had gone capitalist); and foreign imperialists.\(^6\)

P'eng, of dubious social background and militarist connections, was a native of a four-county section in southwest Honan known as Wan-hsi ("West of Wan"). This paper is a preliminary exploration of problems that I shall treat in a book-length local history of this area. A local history of Wan-hsi can bring to the fore many significant historical developments in the Republican period, the importance of which I believe has been either underestimated or ignored: the emergence and growth of a new kind of extra-official local power elite and its interchangeable multi-role nature; the astounding increase in and the changing nature of banditry; the similarities in the economic and political developmental strategies and methods adopted by the CCP and those of other local power-holders that emerged "naturally" in rural Republican China.

A study of the Wan-hsi area is especially valuable for examining this last phenomenon as well as for understanding local rural politics at the time because, unlike other areas for which some detailed sources exist (such as CCP base areas or other areas controlled by groups of various ideological stripes), local leadership of Wan-hsi was entirely native to the area, non-urban, and more directly influenced by traditions from China's past than by theories and ideologies from abroad. Thus, Wan-hsi is more representative of the bulk of Republican China's
rural areas, especially those of the periphery. It is also illustrative of the crisis of legitimacy and how it affected the majority of Chinese who lived in the vast rural hinterlands.

The focus of most political studies of the period is high in the administrative hierarchy, at the national, regional, or provincial level. This local history and my research on local elites in other areas are attempts to qualify or augment the picture provided thus far by historical research by examining such questions as legitimacy from the perspective of the local rural political system. When examining any specific local political power structure and its concrete particulars, one is struck by the virtual irrelevance to local realities of the great mountains of laws, decrees, regulations, statutes, records, and reporting generated at the national or provincial level. Local case histories provided a needed "from the bottom up" view, which should act as a corrective to the impression gained from surveys that focus upon the upper levels of administration and power.

In the Wan-hsi case and in numerous other instances, it appears that even the major political, military, and social developments were never reported (or even acknowledged) at the provincial level or in the metropolitan press. For example, for a decade or more, the entire Wan-hsi area (and many other counties in its vicinity and elsewhere) was virtually independent of any provincially sanctioned authority, such as county magistrates, but one looks in vain in the provincial records or metropolitan newspapers for any hint of this situation. Reports on bandit raids involving bands of division size, the complete destruction of county seats, the kidnapping of virtually entire towns, and assassinations of county magistrates never seem to have found their way into provincial, much less national, consciousness.

To an extent, of course, this is a perfectly natural phenomenon, given the county magistrate's traditional attitude of moral responsibility for irregularities in the area of his charge and his consequent desire to conceal or ignore any that do occur. The advent of the Republic seems to have intensified this tendency. One thinks immediately of the provincial governments' hushing
up of reports of banditry during the first fifteen years of the Republic. Even after the establishment of the Nanking "national" capital in 1928, the central govern-
ment consciously ignored bandit networks and activities almost within artillery range of the capital itself. This is a natural result of the extreme decentralization, the weak or nonexistent central government, and the ten-
dency of central or provincial governments to attempt to hide their lack of power and authority in the rural hinterlands.

Historical scholarship has generated a number of generalizations about the nature of rural society in the first half of the twentieth century which have become truisms; yet often the implications for local rural soci-
ety have not been described in the concrete specifics of a local area. The local history approach is one way of integrating an entire complex of issues vital to an understanding of the period and how it relates to the larger historical process of China's passage from tradi-
tional empire to modern socialist state. Such issues include: the evolution of traditional rural organiza-
tional and institutional forms into modern ones; the relationship of these evolving forms and those of the Communist period; the local self-government and rural modernization ("reconstruction") movements; the identity and function of the mysterious "local bullies and evil gentry" and their own consciousness and self-perceptions; the increased importance and function of personal relations networks; the economic effects of forty years of rampant militarization at all levels; the old rural elite's "desertion" of the countryside for locations high-
er on the hierarchy of central places; the relationship of banditry to China's crisis of legitimacy; the nature of local authority and its relationship to nationalism. Some of these issues have been ignored in the past; others have been treated individually, an approach which fails to convey precisely how they interrelated and in-
teracted in any specific context.

The land tenure system, rural class analysis and class relations are also topics of crucial importance, but they have been the almost exclusive focus of studies of twentieth century rural society and politics. Some
recent works might lead one to think that all rural Chinese were either landlords or tenants, and that the fundamental dynamic of all twentieth-century developments has been the relationship between these two groups. Although these aspects of rural society cannot be ignored in any study of the period, I will generally emphasize other factors because I feel that an approach based exclusively upon class analysis and land tenure distorts the rich complexity of actual local political life.

Local elites. P'eng Yü-t'ing's view that all major types of rural power-holders were illegitimate (bandits or bandit-like) was probably quite common among local power-holders of the time. If no one was authentically legitimate, then anyone with a gun could claim legitimacy. P'eng and several contemporary commentators perceived the emergence in the Republic of a new rural "establishment": a symbiotic coalition of bandits, militarists, officials, functionaries, landlords, and various types of "local bullies and evil gentry." My own research supports such an interpretation. Disintegration of the political and moral communities, and the absence of any single, objective, universally accepted standard of legitimacy produced a new rural elite whose power, although acquired through complex and diverse channels, rested ultimately upon direct or indirect control over forms of organized violence. Defining this new elite in terms of the usual traditional social and economic categories (landlord, gentry, etc.) or even the then current terms (such as local bullies, evil gentry, local tyrants) does not seem to be very useful because of the relativity of legitimacy and other complexities of the situation. To an extent, even an attempt to define the new elite is to fail to capture its true nature. Because of the extreme fluidity inherent in the emerging power-holding system, this new "establishment" was not yet all that established.

This perception of the local rural elite during the Republic does not really contradict any of the current—and often contradictory in themselves—hypotheses concerning their nature, such as: the former degree-holding class maintained its power by adapting to the new Republican environment; the old elite deserted the countryside
and left a leadership vacuum; the landlord class persisted as the ultimate rural power-holders throughout the period; the embourgeoisement of the upper gentry enabled the lower gentry to take control of the local rural political scene.

These and other hypotheses might be valid, but investigation of particular local circumstances will always produce such an abundance of exceptions that perhaps a different approach might be helpful as a supplement to understanding the issue. In other words, the "new" rural elite comes from such a bewildering variety of social and economic backgrounds, and achieved power through such a wide array of means, that hypothesis based upon social and economic categories should be augmented by an approach that takes these additional factors into account. One does not have to search far to find that in almost any specific locale, particular families (or parts of families) who had belonged to various social and economic categories of imperial era power-holders did not survive as elites, while other families of these categories did. Conversely, in any specific locale, particular families of imperial era non-elite categories joined the new Republican period establishment while some did not. Even this seemingly incontrovertible generalization is too neat for the complexity of concrete local reality in a period of lost legitimacy. For example, many déclassé elements joined the new establishment, but at the same time, there is a superabundance of cases in which traditional power-holders (such as a son of a big landlord) joined the establishment through becoming a déclassé element (such as a bandit).

Two important Republican period leaders of rural movements, who were ideological opposites, came to similar conclusions about the nature of power in their time. Mao Tse-tung, a Marxist who obviously tended to emphasize the class identity of local power-holders, concluded that "power grows out of the barrel of the gun." Liang Shuming, a Confucian conservative who tended to downplay internal rural class identity, came to the same, though less pithy and quotable, conclusion: that all power-holders, whatever they were called—warlords, landlords, militia lords, local tyrants, bad gentry—held power only because of and as long as they held that gunbarrel. P'eng Yu-t'ing, the "local tyrant" of dubious social background from Wan-hsi, put it this way: the "gun-holding class"
(yu-ch'iang chieh-chi) oppresses the "gun-less class" (wu-ch'iang chieh-chi). All three views imply that all current power-holders were illegitimate. To Liang, for example, the head of the "national" government of the time (Chiang Kai-shek) was no more than a successful warlord. A warlord, in turn, "is a creature of this [present] state of confusion. He is different from a bandit only in scale, but there is by no means any difference between them in nature. When a bandit increases his power, he then is promoted to warlord. When a warlord is down-and-out, he then is a bandit." One could then conclude that all power-holders were bandits, for none had legitimacy.

Terms. The contemporary accounts, studies, and reports on early twentieth-century rural China contain a vast number of terms for local power-holders, and these terms themselves reinforce the impression of the power-holders' questionable legitimacy. The whole range of official titles—which would be legitimizing if used alone—are frequently in effect delegitimized with a preceding adjective. Such a use of the word "bandit" (fei) seems to have become increasingly prevalent with the Republic, producing such terms as "bandit officials" (fei-kuan), "bandit soldiers" (fei-ping), and P'eng Yu-t'ing's variation, "bandit style" (t'u-fei shih). Other delegitimizing prefixes include "false" (wei), "so-called" (so-wei), and that term of venerable imperial-era ancestry: "corrupt and rapacious officials and functionaries" (t'an-kuan wu-li).

Value-laden prefixes also modify and categorize terms associated with elite status but not necessarily official power. Thus, there are various types of gentry (shen), including "evil gentry" (lieh-shen), as opposed to "upright gentry" (cheng-shen). Several gentry terms are carry-overs from the old imperial-era degree-holding elite, but distinctions in their application are not very precisely observed in Republican times: plain "gentry" (shen-shih or shih-shen), "venerable" (shen-ch'i), and "powerful and influential" (chu-shen). Although chu-shen always indicates someone with substantial influence, perhaps extending over an entire county or more, the other terms do not seem to denote any particular characteristic with any consistency, other than that the person
so designated was considered literate and legitimate. A 
shen-shih, for example, might or might not be an urbanized 
type living in the county seat.

Other legitimizing terms for people with local, but 
not necessarily official, power are "local personage" 
(ti-fang jen-shih) and a great number of terms indicating 
elite status and usually translated as "virtuous and wor-
thy" or "virtuous and wise": ming-shih, shuo-shih, hsien-
ta, hsien-liang, hsien-yen, hsiang-hsien. In contrast 
are the vast number of delegitimizing terms for unofficial 
local power-holders. The term itself expresses illegiti-
macy while modifiers suggest other qualities: "local bul-
ly" (t'u-hao), "rich bully" (fu-hao), "militia lord" 
(t'uan-fa or t'uan-pa), "local tyrant" (e-pa). In the 
absence of any objective standard, the choice from such 
a multiplicity of legitimizing or delegitimizing terms and 
modifiers depends on the subjective judgment of the des-
ignator concerning the relative legitimacy of the person 
or group being identified.

Terms for "bandit" in general are even more numer-
ous, varied, and complex. There are dozens of generic 
terms, such as tao-fei, tsei-fei, tsei-k'ou, t'u-fei, or 
hao-k'o, which do not indicate anything about size or 
type, only that the person or group is considered bandit 
and illegitimate. Other terms vaguely indicate scale; ku-
fei, kan-fei, and pang-fei refer to large gangs of sev-
eral dozen to several thousand. Sometimes the prefix hints 
at the mode or operation. Liu-k'ou, liu-tsei, and yu-tsei, 
for example, refer to "roving" bandits who operate basic-
ally in the plains but not confined to one area. Shan-
fei indicates those who operate in the mountains. In the 
Northeast at least, kao-ma-fei and hsiang-ma describe 
bandits who are mounted, while hu-ma-fei and ho-k'ou 
refer to those operating on or near water. Finally, there 
are hundreds of local dialect terms for bandits not usually 
understood outside the area, such as the Szechwanese word 
pang-k'o or the Honanese words lao-t'ang and t'ang-chiang.

Other terms, while associated with the rural under-
world, are "neutral," neither legitimizing or delegitimiz-
ing in themselves, but sufficing for either depending upon 
the context in which used. Here we come to the very fas-
cinating but complex question of the relationship between 
orthodox high culture and popular oral culture. Leaving
aside folk religions and secret societies, there is another non-Confucian tradition which began with the "knight-errant" (yu-hsia) of the Warring States period. The code and culture of this cavalleria rusticana defies exact description because, by late imperial times, its perimeters blur with orthodox Confucianism, folk religion, and semi-religious secret societies, as well as with the criminal subculture of outright outlaws. Indeed, the communal values of the "greenwood" (lù-lín) or the "rivers and lakes" (chiang-hu) contain elements of all. Although this tradition is sometimes regarded as a counterculture to the world or orthodox Confucian values, I see it more as a marital-muscular reflection of those very values. The supreme value of this greenwood world, "righteousness" (i) and its behavioral referents, were not that dissimilar from the Confucian "righteousness" of the orthodox elite.

This world found its literary expression in dozens of popular tales such as The Water Margin (Shui-hu-chuan), The Cases of Lord P'eng (P'eng Kung an), and The Three Knights Errant and the Five Righteous Heros (San-hsia wu-i). The picaresque heros of the works, while often actual outlaws operating in direct defiance of the "official" world, nevertheless accorded great respect to such Confucian values as filial piety, loyalty, and chastity. When the "he-men" (hao-han) characters in these works of fiction despised the orthodox power-holders, they did so not because the power-holders were "orthodox" or "official," but rather because they did not live up to the orthodox values. Thus, corrupt officials were fair game for robbery or even murder, but upright officials were respected. The upright orthodox power-holders, for their part, also respected the righteous bravos and even enlisted them outright into the orthodox world. It is significant, I think, that the most famous "rivers and lakes" figures in both history and fiction, such as Huang T'ien-pa, Tsu Ti, T'ien Wei, Chu Chang, Chin Yun, Lu Su, Tai Jo-szu, Kuo Yuan-chen, Chiao Chi-hsun, Kuo Chin, Ts'ao Hsien, and Sung K'o, all ended up becoming officials and officers, often through the help of the orthodox officials. The entire band of 108 heros of Liang Shan in The Water Margin eventually became regular army officers. Indeed, the he-man rovers of rivers and lakes, rather than having an intrinsic aversion and hostility toward the orthodox
official world, seem to yearn for official recognition and status.

This yearning persisted, even for the more ambiguous status of the Republican period. At the time of the Republican revolution, the revolutionaries were able to organize much of the greenwood community of Honan (the region famous throughout history and fiction for its disproportionately large number of yu-hsia) against the Manchus with promises of official legitimacy. These descendents of the great Honan bravos were quite explicit about their expectations:

When good old sixth brother [Wang T'ien-tsung, the most influential of the Honan greenwood brethren] becomes vice-governor [of Honan], then we all can emerge in the open. When ... we throw the emperor out of Peking and establish Sun Wen [Yat-sen] then we all can be officials, so nobody dare call us bandits again.15

One element of the greenwood ethic does not, on the surface, blend with Confucian orthodoxy: the "Robin Hood" social bandit ethic, which sets a high value on "robbing the rich and aiding the poor" (chieh-fu chi-ch'iung). It would appear, however, that there is a suitable genteel, nonviolent version of this ethic in Confucianism itself. In literature and history, for instance, many of the righteous officials who co-opted the greenwood types are often described as "helping the poor and oppressed against the rich and powerful." To an extent, then, legitimacy derived from the Robin Hood strain in the greenwood culture blends well with Confucian reformist populism, and this happy blend also coincides nicely with the new Republican populist sources of legitimacy in the twentieth century. Sometimes all three ethics were used simultaneously to legitimate certain local power-holders of dubious origins. The common ground for all is "the people."

Thus, members of the greenwood could acquire a certain legitimacy in local eyes even without the legitimacy of official status. In the appropriate context, a whole range of epithets associated with the greenwood but not necessarily with "banditry" could connote such legitimate status. Examples include: "rovers of the rivers and lakes" (p'ao chiang-hu te) and "veterans of the rivers and lakes"
(lao chiang-hu), as well as "swordsman" or "enforcer" (tao-k'o), "escort" or "bodyguard" (piao-k'ou), and "king of the mountain fort" (shan-chai-wang). In addition there are a number of positively legitimizing terms which rely on both the greenwood ethic and Confucian populism, such as "popular rustic hero" (ts'ao-tse ying-hsiung or ts'ao-se ying-hsiung), "he-man of the greenwood" (lu-lin hao-han), and "martial hero" (hao-chieh).

Although the legitimacy of greenwood populism had always been subjective—lacking as it did the centralized institutional structure of imperial-era orthodox legitimacy—its standards also became more relative and fluid with the loss of the throne and rise of Republican populism. Just as the various terms for local power-holders could legitimize or delegitimize a single individual ("local bully" vs. "local personage"), so too could a member of the greenwood be designated in greenwood terminology ("bandit" vs. "popular rustic hero"). With all standards gone, the frequency with which a single individual might be so designated, legitimized and delegitimized, increased to such a degree that the difference from the imperial era becomes qualitative as well as quantitative.

Take for example the case of the Honan bandit chief-tain Wang T'ien-tsung. To the imperial bureaucracy, he was a plain unvarnished bandit (fei-tao), albeit a powerful and influential one (chu-tu or chu-k'uei). When the Republican revolutionaries gained his support against the monarchy, he became legitimized in Republican eyes as a "popular rustic hero." After the revolution succeeded, he became a major-general and presidential advisor to Yuan Shih-k'ai, who awarded him special honors. When the Republican KMT's struggle against Yuan flared into open warfare in 1913, the Republicans supported the bandit White Wolf (Pai Lang), who thus became a "rustic hero" to them. Yuan sent Wang to suppress the Republican's new "popular hero," so Wang naturally reverted to "bandit" status as far as the Republicans were concerned. After Yuan's death, however, Wang also moved against Chang Hsun's attempt to restore the Ch'ing monarchy in 1917, so he could again be referred to as a "swordsman." He also made points with Tuan Ch'i-jui's clique, but by that time, the Southern regime of Sun Yat-sen considered the Northern
militarist regime illegitimate, so Wang's status in Southern eyes was still bandit. In early 1917, however, he sneaked out of Peking and returned to his old stomping grounds in Honan, gathered several thousand greenwood brothers together and proclaimed himself the commander of the legitimate-sounding "Honan Army for the Pacification of the Nation" (Ho-nan ching-kuo-chun szu-ling). He thereupon declared his independence from the Northern regime and joined the Southern side, so his legitimization changed again; he became a bandit to the regime in Peking, while he was a "commander" to the Southern side. Because he changed so much, Republican historical materials most often refer to him with the more neutral term "swordsman" rather than with a more positive or negative term.16 Cases of this nature on the local level are, as might be expected, even more convoluted, but in some form or another, the basis for legitimacy for all parties is whether they have acted for the benefit of "the people."

There are several reasons why the terms understood prima facie in any one source are practically meaningless. First, the designation is always situational—that is, relative to the position and attitude of the designator and to the time at which it was used. In Communist materials from the War of Resistance period, for example, "gentry" might be "enlightened" or "evil," "patriotic" or "traitorous," depending upon the specific situation of that power-holder vis-à-vis the CCP, or part of the CCP doing the categorizing. A guerrilla leader fighting the Japanese might earn grudging acceptance from both the KMT and CCP as well as the local population during the war. During the civil strife and confusion that followed the war, however, the same leader, though he might continue to function as he always had—to defend and protect his local area—might become a "local hero" and "commander" or a "local bully" and "tyrant," depending, of course, on whether he happened to have established close ties with one side or another and who was doing the labeling. Most often, the relations, both among local power-holders and with those on higher levels of authority (administratively or militarily), seemed determined more by personal relations and the specifics of the situation than by considerations such as ideological affinity, class loyalty, or social origins.
Second, while some terms convey a sense of scale, the Republic seems to have ushered in a period of such extreme vertical mobility that scale changes very rapidly. A "local rascal" (ti-p'i), for example, might within a short period become a "militia lord" and even a "warlord," his power expanding from the area of a single village to several counties.

Third, an important element in the Confucian ethos that has profoundly influenced Chinese political culture and affects the use of these designations is reciprocity (pao), the underlying principle of all moral relationships. By reciprocity, all moral relationships naturally differ according to the individual's particular situation. Although Chinese ethics in general might be described as the apotheosis of individualism, it is highly individualistic, dyadic, and particularistic. All moral obligations and the resulting social relationships they held together are extendable outward from the individual. If the individual is viewed as the center of a series of concentric circles with each circle representing a type of moral relationship, the relationship of the individual to others is dyadic and relative to the other circles. As one Chinese anthropologist notes, the Chinese are willing to sacrifice the outward concentric circles by degrees for those smaller and nearer: to sacrifice distant kin for close kin, clan for family, locale for clan, larger organization for locale, and so on. Thus, if an individual is faced with, let us say, a rapacious corrupt local official, and the official is so designated by those whose proximity of relationship is greater than the official's, then indeed the individual accepts that the official is rapacious and corrupt. If, however, the official's own proximity is greater than those judging him corrupt, then to that individual, the official is not corrupt and rapacious, but rather a virtuous filial son whose minor exactions are solely to provide for his aged mother. If the figure in question is not an official, but, let us say, a bandit, the same principle applies. The bandit is regarded not as a bandit, but rather a righteous "popular hero" who is protecting the poor and weak against the rich and powerful. The same would naturally apply in determining who is an "upright" gentry and who is an "evil" one, or who is a "local bully" and
who is a "local self-government leader."

Personal relations networks which determined these perceptions of legitimacy or illegitimacy are, of course, important in all cultures and political systems, and certainly more important in imperial China than in most. With the disintegration of the institutional and ethical systems upon which traditional personal relationships were based, however, other types of personal relationship networks assumed a greater importance than before (to be sure, most forms already existed in some form in imperial times). Personal networks generated by the imperial administrative and academic structures were of crucial political importance in imperial times. With the demise of both structures, however, other forms, some new and others which were minor in imperial society, assumed great importance. Ties formed in the "modern" educational sector (domestic and foreign, military and civil), for instance, were entirely new and crucial in the Republican period. Other traditional but informal (or at least "unorthodox") associations, such as those myriad types of mutual aid associations sometimes termed "secret" societies, expanded dramatically, not only in membership but also in the variety of backgrounds of members. Kin relationships, naturally important in imperial times, no longer had a centralized imperial bureaucracy to contend with, and also assumed greater importance. All new and old forms of personal association seemed to have multiplied and expanded to fill the vacuum (or perhaps perform the function) of disintegrating or extinct institutions and structures.

Fourth, neither the terms nor the actors are usually functionally discrete. A militia leader's power would be based upon his command of the militia, so he could be termed a "militia lord." Yet, he might also be the supreme political power in the area, so he could concurrently be a "local tyrant." Since there is no firm line in scale between local tyrant and local bully, he might also be termed the latter. Moreover, some individuals did slip in and out of various roles or actually wear more than one "hat" at a time. They might be former bandits turned regular officers in a newly commissioned army unit, or even continue their bandit activities while serving in the new post or as a local self-government leader.
The case of Pieh T'ing-fang, one of the Wan-hsi self-government leaders, nicely illustrates several of these points. When he started his career, he was known, locally as a bandit or "a rover of the rivers and lakes" or even a beggar. After he had established himself, he was a fort master (shan-chai-chu) and then a ward militia head (t'uan-tsung). At this point, various people within the county who were not part of his personal relations network could well have described him as a local bully or bandit or local tyrant. Most certainly the county magistrate and the provincial government would have. Others in the county and outside it who were part of his network considered him a "popular hero" (ts'ao-tse ying-hsiung) or even a "local personage" (ti-fang jen-shih). By the late 1920s, Pieh was a county militia commander (suzu-ling) to himself and the locals, but to others still a bandit. By the early 1930s, he was a local self-government leader and rural reconstructor. By 1933, he was the supreme power in the four-county area. During the same period, however, the provincial government in Kaifeng still considered him a local bully and a militia lord because he was not paying various taxes and was resisting provincial government attempts to influence things within Wan-hsi. Provincial troops were almost sent to occupy the area on several occasions.

In 1932, when the remnant E-Yu-Wan Soviet Communists were being chased across Honan by "bandit suppression troops" of Chiang Kai-shek, they passed through Wan-hsi. Pieh and his colleagues responded in the same way they would have toward provincial troops— with resistance. So, Pieh became a local bully, local tyrant, and a militia lord to the CCP. With the Japanese invasion in 1937, however, the provincial government's interests and Pieh's began to coincide; the provincial government needed a secure base and Pieh needed material support against the invaders. Consequently, through the establishment of a personal relationship with a member of the KMT central committee, the government coaxed a somewhat reluctant Pieh to Kaifeng for a meeting. Eventually Pieh became the commander of a thirteen-county militia under the auspices of the provincial government. At this point, Pieh fought the Japanese and so became a legitimate local leader in KMT and central government eyes, and, although
there is no record, presumably legitimate in CCP eyes too. About a hundred miles to the east, the nephew of P'eng Yu-t'ing, his closest Wan-hsi associate, was fighting exactly the same kind of guerrilla war with similar forces and winning great praise from Mao.

In 1940, Pieh and the government were again on the verge of open warfare, and so he was again moved toward the militia-lord category. At this point, fortunately for his friends who wrote of his exploits after they had fled to Taiwan, Pieh died with most of his legitimacy still intact in KMT eyes. After 1949, of course, Pieh reverted (posthumously) to being a local tyrant and militia lord, according to the newly established Communist regime. It is entirely conceivable, however, that if his geographic location had been somewhat different and his colleague's nephew, not the KMT central committee member, had first established a personal relationship with him, he might still be a "war hero" and "local resistance leader" today. Indeed, despite his low social origins, he might have become a "patriot gentry" in history.

Perhaps the most important and basic reason for this confusion in terms is the lack of a single standard of legitimacy. Of course, there was one recognized source of legitimacy and it is to this source that all elites appealed. Certainly, the ordinary local bully or evil gentry must have been aware of the ambiguity of his position. P'eng Yu-t'ing, addressing graduates of a south Honan militia workship he had organized, certainly was aware of the basic problem:

What after all is the distinction between those who are local bullies and evil gentry and those who are not? They are quite easily distinguished! If someone wilfully insists that a person is a local-bully/evil-gentry, and that person [really] is not, the others will not agree. For example, in this province there are some corrupt and rapacious officials and functionaries who wilfully insist that Pieh Hsiang-chai [T'ing-fang] and I are local bullies and evil gentry. This is really ridiculous! I can in one sentence make an absolutely clear and definitive distinction: whoever works and plans for the benefit of the masses [ch'un-chung] is not local-bully/
evil-gentry. Warlords and non-warlords can also be distinguished by this criteria.20

The people. P'eng was well aware that the same criteria could be used against him, for it was ultimately a subjective and situational standard. At any time, he knew, some government army might use the illegitimate power-holder designation to invade and occupy Wan-hsi and overthrow its present leadership.21 This situation might well serve as a paradigm for what lost legitimacy meant concretely on the local scene. The army could be legitimized by their "official" status and by "the people," who were, in provincial government eyes, oppressed by the "local bully/evil gentry" (even "bandit") Wan-hsi leadership. On the other hand, the Wan-hsi leadership's armed resistance could be legitimized because they "work and plan for the benefit of the masses," while the government troops, in their view, were "bandit troops" following orders from "bandit officials."

The army's motivation for the invasion, aside from the immediate opportunity to loot, would be to make "military requisitions" (by all accounts, thinly disguised extortion). The provincial government officials' motivation would be to tax the area and control it through their own bureaucratic apparatus. All parties, while "bandits" to each other, found the source of legitimacy in "the people" or the "masses," and all actions were proclaimed to be for the benefit of the people.

Even local power-holders who were openly self-confessed bandits claimed legitimacy from "the people." The following proclamation of a bandit gang in southwestern Shantung is fairly standard. Through the surprisingly easy fusion of Confucian-Mencian populism and the greenwood ethic with Western populism, the bandits established their own legitimacy while explicitly denying the legitimacy of other power-holders in the six-county area they had staked out:

Because of increased illegal taxation and forced military requisitions, the four classes of the people cannot live and work in peace and contentment [an-chu le-yeh]. The cause is that corrupt rapa-
cious officials, in connivance with local bullies and evil gentry, are tyrannizing [the people]. We heros [hao-chieh] just cannot tolerate this situation. . . . Our hearts are full of sympathy [for the plight of the people]. So we men of the greenwood have assembled here, shouting out the call, for no other reason than to remove this corruption. Arise, men of Shantung! Let us carry out the government of the people! 22

Naturally, the precise manner in which the legitimacy of "the people" was used depended upon the specific situation of the local power-holder. After these bandits had held up a train and taken many foreigners hostage (through which they could make demands upon the provincial government) their basis for legitimacy shifted somewhat. Now that they had the wherewithal to force the government to take them into the provincial army as "gar¬rison" troops of their old six-county area (thereby insuring that they would be able to continue their extortion and stealing, but outright and with official sanction), they could no longer rail at the local "establishment," for they were joining it. Nor could they refer to the evils of "forced military requisitions" and "illegal taxes," for they would be operating under these two "legitimate" sanctions. Instead, they now proclaimed themselves the "Self-Government Army for National Construction" and thereby staked their claim to legitimacy in both worlds; not only was self-government legitimized by "the people," but it was also "official." Now their chief rivals for legitimacy were other "troops." Thus, they demanded "a suitable locality for our occupation," but insisted they would "not disturb the countryfolk as the troops do at present." 23

The bandits' ploy was successful, and they were soon legitimized as soldiers, but of course, carrying on business as usual: "The newly made soldiers of Sun Mei¬yao continue to prey on the villagers as usual. They now wear the gray uniforms of the army and do not have to raid. They merely help themselves. The poor villages are compelled to submit." 24

This, of course, did not end the legitimacy game. Before "Sun Mei-yao barely had the creases out of his brigadier-general's uniform and had got used to a higher
grade of cigarettes," another gang of bandits, not in Sun's own personal network, came along with a proclamation similar to Sun's initial justification for his gang's actions. Again under the guise of legitimacy derived from the people, the new band kidnapped Sun's mother and two sisters, shot his nephew, and threatened Sun himself.25

But what did all this actually mean to "the people?" Several contemporary observers perceived quite precisely what the disintegration of the old order and loss of a single standard of legitimacy meant for the rural areas. They expressed it in various ways, but the following nicely sums up what many felt:

Gradually by degrees, the standards of good and bad, right and wrong, have become jumbled. People of all levels are out for profit, and now there is no criteria by which to call anyone a thief or anyone evil. Those intellectuals who are enraptured with the desire for high official posts and money will, often with serene self-respect, become bandits [tsou lü-lin]. If you mention to them that banditry is a crime, they just laugh it off as stupid.26

Local bullies and evil gentry (t'u-hao lieh-shen). These two terms almost always appear together in Republican period material (sometimes abbreviated as t'u-lieh). Most often they refer to local rural elites below the county level, but occasionally to those at the county level and above. These local elites were the chief beneficiaries of the downward devolution of power that had commenced in the nineteenth century and reached its peak during the Republican period. The best hypothesis on their basic characteristics, including sources of income, nature of their tenacious grip on local rural society, and relationship to both local government and higher administrative organs, is presented in Philip Kuhn's article "Local Self-government under the Republic."27

My own research supports the general assumption that these types (by at least someone's designation) virtually monopolized local self-government agencies throughout the Republican period. Indeed, one is hard put to find a contemporary observer of any credibility who does not take this for granted. This fact does not, however, explain
much about them and their other characteristics. Kuhn uses life-style to distinguish between the local bullies and evil gentry and to distinguish both from urbanized gentry (shen-shih or shih-shen). Both local bullies and evil gentry are rural, but the evil gentry are leisured, while the local bullies are nonleisured. These are excellent ideal types and quite useful in analysis, but because of the difficulties in defining these or any terms used on the local level during the Republican period, they do not quite fit all variations.

For example, the degree of lateral mobility, or interchangeability of local bullies and evil gentry with other local power-holders, is remarkable. The same individual might move with ease through several "roles" or designations. (If change of scale is part of the role change, of course, vertical mobility is also involved.) A successful bandit leader (of any origin) often became a "militarist" or warlord, and might retire with his accumulated stash and become a big landlord, an "evil" or "upright" gentry, or a militia lord. He might proceed to civil office in local or provincial governments, or simply hold unofficial power in a market town, county, or group of counties. Of course, at any time he might remove himself from the rural power game altogether by retiring to the gracious ease of a metropolitan center. (Even this action did not necessitate his breaking off Greenwood connections, for he might well operate a gang in north Hu-peif while residing in Shanghai.) 28 By affecting some literary, antiquarian, or reformist interest, he might become a local urban notable, or just go into business and be a plain bourgeois. About a dozen local bandit leaders near the Wan-hsi area (some with higher education!) launched careers with the Republican revolution. While some remained local powers through the period, others prudently retired early to big cities; others became presidential advisors, provincial governors, and officers in a succession of different armies, including the CCP's and KMT's.

Let us look at the case of P'eng Yu-t'ing himself, considered by many as a model local bully/evil gentry. He came from a family which ran a medicine shop in a small village. The family had almost no land and, at least on his father's side of the family, the relatives were poor
peasants engaged in silkweaving. Other relatives, however, did seem to have some wealth, for P'eng was able, through a pooling of their resources, to attend high school in Kaifeng, and later to attend a college in Peking, at least for a short time. He returned to his home before graduation, and found a high school English-teaching job in the neighboring county. In 1922, through some personal connection, he joined warlord Feng Yu-hsiang's organization as a civil administrator. He rose rapidly to be general secretary for Feng's right-hand man, Chang Chih-chiang. In 1927, he returned home and decided to stay. He soon became village chief, and then militia head for the ward. He then organized and directed local militias on several levels throughout south Honan. After an interlude of association with rural reconstructionists Liang Shuming and Liang Chung-hua, which took him away from his home area, he returned in 1930 and in effect engineered the overthrow of official governments in the Wan-hsi area. The Chen-p'ing county magistrate was killed in the process. P'eng remained the supreme power in the county until his assassination in 1933, at the age of 39.

Without any universally accepted, objective standard of legitimacy, local rural elites seem to have been created and destroyed with great rapidity. Many, such as P'eng Yu-t'ing, seem to have started with a bare minimum of political resources, sometimes only skill with a weapon, or some degree of literacy, or some personal relationship with an already established power-holder. Consider, for example, the famous rural reconstruction experimental site in Ting-hsien Hopei. James Y. C. Yen and the Mass Education Association's work in literacy education and other programs encountered some local opposition. Naturally, the reformers insisted that all opposition emanated from the local-bully/evil-gentry class who were continually thinking of ways to hinder mass education because they feared an enlightened peasantry (or "people"). The graduates of the reformers' literacy courses, through formation of "alumni associations," created a "new school tie" network. Soon reports began to appear that the graduates had become "overbearing and aggressive" because of
their newly acquired learning. They "interfered with village government and scrambled for power." Moreover, the "evil elements [among them] took advantage of the situation for unhindered oppression [of the peasantry]" who had become "as meat and fish [to them]." In short, they had become local bullies and evil gentry. Because the peasants "had been repeatedly maltreated in various ways they lost their faith in the Mass Education Association."32 The Mass Education Association, of course, dismissed such criticisms as coming from the (previous?) local-bully/evil-gentry class,33 but it does seem probable that literacy as well as the personal relations network the classes had engendered did indeed create a "new" local-bully/evil-gentry class.

It is impossible to say how important the literacy component was, but certainly other observers identified "bureaucratic-style schools" (that is, Western-style) as a veritable factory for local bullies and evil gentry and bandits as well. "After uncorrupted youths enter a bureaucratic-style school they become luxury-loving, arrogant vagabonds out for selfish gain."34

To elucidate the relationship between legitimacy and the local rural scene as well as to give further indication of the fluid, multi-role, interchangeable, and complex nature of the Republican period local rural elite, I will discuss briefly the relationship of the local elite to three major elements of local rural power: local government, landlordism, and organized violence.

Local government and the local rural elite. That "local bullies and evil gentry" tended to monopolize sub-county self-government posts was a very common assumption during the Republic and need not be discussed at length here. "Self-government" agencies were, both because of their very nature and because of the disintegration of the traditional rural institutions, effective instruments through which those who could control them could acquire wealth and power. One succinct expression of the situation was:
Just think of how it is:
1 - The peasantry has always been easily bullied and cheated;
2 - Organize them into a district and put on top an agency connected with local government;
3 - Let this agency frequently issue orders forcing [the peasants] to do this or that;
4 - Let this agency tax them and get their money by force;
5 - Let this agency accuse them of certain unlawful acts (such as opium smoking and gambling) . . . and then punish them;
6 - Let this agency, moreover, possess armed force --a peace preservation corps.35

The proliferation of legitimizing titles under the Republic, the same commentator suggests:

Virtually creates opportunities for the local bullies and evil gentry, allowing them to obtain formally a legal position so that the common people have even less right to speak out [against them] . . . . Also it opens up to [the local bullies and evil gentry] many [legal] pretexts and titles [through which to exploit the people] and moreover to increase their own power resources.36

It is not entirely clear, however, according to the commentator or in my own mind, whether the self-government agencies simply increased the legitimacy and power of already established local power-holders and their networks or whether they may have to some extent "created" new local power-holders and networks. Elsewhere the same commentator asserts:

Although it is common to say that the local bullies and evil gentry are feudal forces, actually local bullies and evil gentry are not at all a traditional thing. In the previous old society of China there were not many [legal] pretexts or many [such] opportunities to allow people to become local bullies and evil gentry. It is only in recent years that various conditions in society have coalesced simultaneously to form local bullies and evil gentry.37
He even goes as far as to suggest that:

If, in the spirit of do-nothing [wu-wei] government prevalent during the past several thousand years, you let them [the rural Chinese] live their disorganized and peaceful lives, there would not necessarily be many local bullies and evil gentry. But if self-government is established by coercion, then even in a place where there were no local bullies and evil gentry to begin with, local bullies and evil gentry will be created.38

At this point in my research, I am not prepared to rule out the possibility that self-government agencies did, in some cases and to some degree, "create" a new elite whose power was, originally at least, based only upon its position in local self-government, or that consequently the establishment of local self-government agencies in itself created new networks of personal relations and patronage.39

This question aside, however, the term local-bully/evil-gentry still lacks clarity. Does it signify anything except a negative judgment of the user on the legitimacy of the power-holder so designated? Does it refer to any discrete group, definable in any way at all? To identify or define the local bullies and evil gentry through their positions in local self-government is, after all, circular. Who and what are the local bullies and evil gentry? They are elites who occupied local self-government positions. Who are the people who occupied local self-government positions? They are local bullies and evil gentry. Still, one persuasive thesis might be to define them by their relationship to official bureaucracy in general and the county government in particular.

In Ch'ing times, the terms "local bullies" and "evil gentry" were used primarily by the government to describe those local elites acting against the interests of the official bureaucracy. The very fact that Republican government reports use the same terms would suggest that they are definable as local elites whose relationship to the county government was antagonistic. In the Republic, the continuing devolution
of power downward into the hands of the sub-county elites came into direct conflict with both provincial and national government attempts to curb the power of these elites and to sequester the rural economic surplus for official use by building a modern vertically linked bureaucratic network below the county level. Because, then, the government (at whatever higher level and of whatever nature) and the local sub-county elites were competing for local economic and political resources, and because this competition took the form of higher administrative level authorities' struggle to thrust a modern vertically responsive bureaucratic structure into the lower interstices of rural society, we might assume that the local bullies and county magistrate should have been adversaries.

In actuality, however, we find that the relationship between the county government and those power-holders called local bullies and evil gentry was far from uniform. For example, the Wan-hsi case would seem prima facie to represent the expected adversary relationship between local-bullies/evil-gentry and the county authorities carried to the ultimate: the local bullies and evil gentry in effect overthrew the county government and openly took officials' functions into their own hands. The county magistrates, moreover, had already drawn first blood by assassinating one of P'eng Yü-t'ing's clique, a local self-government militia leader in Teng county named Ning Hsi-ku.40 P'eng and his associates, however, announced that the reason for their action was to break the power of local bullies and evil gentry who were colluding and conniving with the "corrupt" government officials in oppressing "the people."41 This sort of collaborative symbiotic relationship between the county government and local-bullies/evil-gentry was not at all unusual.42 There were other cases in which the county magistrate patronized or colluded with local bandits against the local elites (or parts thereof) and sometimes together with the local elites (or parts thereof).43

On the other hand, there are plenty of cases
in which it was the local bullies and evil gentry who colluded with bandit chiefs against the county government, or against the "other" local bullies/evil gentry in sub-county government organs, or both. One rural survey of 1933, for example, reports that in Nan-chao County, Honan:

The local bullies and evil gentry collude with bandits to get their way. The county magistrate, the ward chiefs, and so on, all must listen to their dictates, for if they do otherwise, their own positions become insecure. The local bullies and evil gentry even manufacture their own firearms and supply the bandits with them.  

Another commentator notes that "they [the local bullies and evil gentry] go as far as to collude with bandits for their own aggrandizement, and they use the intimidation method to frighten the local officials and populace into obedience."45

Thus, the county government's relationship to local power-holders, however designated, could be either collaborative or antagonistic. Collaboration, however, would not be necessarily with all local power-holders, but, depending on local conditions, with a particular portion of them. On the basis of my research thus far, I would judge that this was another fluid relationship and change was often so rapid that the personal network of local power-holders, which enjoyed a collaborative relationship with the county yamen, might change during the tenure of any magistrate. It is difficult to ferret out from available sources, however, precisely how and why these relationships changed. One example from Wan-hsi suffices to show how puzzling these changes can be. In the summer of 1929, in Chen-p'ing (before P'eng's "revolution"), it was public knowledge that the county government functionaries were colluding with a large bandit gang in a neighboring county and selling official-issue ammunition to it. This was going on with the magistrate's knowledge and acquiescence. At the end of August, presumably after they had purchased sufficient ordnance for the operation, the bandits proceeded to raid Chen-p'ing and
the county seat itself, no doubt with the connivance of the same county yamen functionaries who were supplying them. The bandits, who (incidentally) virtually razed most of the county seat and took thousands of residents hostage, also killed the magistrate. Either the bandits had made a terrible mistake, or their relationship with the magistrate had altered fundamentally during the summer months, or they betrayed him outright.

Landlordism and local-bullies/evil-gentry. Because of the consequences of the loss of legitimacy and the general fluidity of the local rural political scene, the relationship between local power-holders and landlordism seems as kaleidoscopic as their relationship with local government. Contemporary observers (and almost all historians) nevertheless assume a connection between landlordism and local power. Depending upon the observer (or the historian), the common assumptions are that landlordism is the ultimate source of power on the local rural scene; or that landlords indirectly controlled other power-holders such as local bullies and evil gentry; or that local bullies and evil gentry were themselves landlords. Observers generally stated the situation to the effect that "local bullies and evil gentry are sometimes themselves landlords and some of them collude with landlords." As the land-tenure system and land holdings are among the relatively few factors we can treat empirically, the relationship is certainly worth investigating.

"Landlord," of course, has limits as an empirical category; in many cases landlordism becomes a very elusive concept. There are always tenants who rent out land or sublet to other tenants; rich peasants who are many times wealthier than their landlord neighbor; or poor peasants who hire temporary agricultural labor, and so on. Moreover, landlords with the same amount of land in the same locale might be worlds apart in all other respects. The most obvious and important distinction is between the rentier absentee landlord and the classic landlord in residence. A rentier might be an urban businessman—chamber of commerce leader living far from his holdings and with no contact at all with his tenants. At the other extreme

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is a large landlord who is also a "fort master" (chai-chu); he would have a singularly intimate, deeply "feudal" relationship with his tenants.

By the 1920s, most rentier families had moved at least to the county seat, where they were invariably a part of the local power scene, or to centers several ranks higher in the central place hierarchy, where they often lost their hold on local influence. If they did retain any local influence, the extent depended upon so many variables—the nature and scale of kinship organizations in the area, the kind and type of holdings, the closeness and local status of kin still in residence on the local scene, personal relations with various power-holders of the locale, the relative importance of land rent income compared to urban-generated income—that generalizations are hard to make. Some rentier families simply sold off their holdings and moved into large cities, thereby relinquishing all influence in the area of their former holdings.

Even the landlord-in-residence category (at the village, township, or ward level) might include all manner of variations, such as temples, monasteries, "associations," lineages, clans, and corporations. In the Wan-hsi area, for example, several of the largest and most "feudal" landlords were monasteries. In between are other cases, such as the "landlord village" institution, which was most prevalent in peripheral areas. It was a fortified market town that housed area landlords of various sizes, who had gathered there for physical security, but it was not a feudalistic "fort" village (chai) with a single landlord as master.

Naturally, the factors affecting any specific landlord's decision to move into the county seat, or to divest himself of his holdings and move to a large city, or to become an absentee landlord, or to move into (or create) a chai or a landlord village, appear to be particular to each local situation. A concrete example from Wan-hsi history may be useful in illustrating the problem.

At least during the early 1930s, the second biggest landlord in Chen-p'ing was one Wang Shuo-ch'ing,
who had 1,153 mou of land and lived in Big Elmtree Village (Ta yü-shu ts'un) about three miles west on the main road from the county seat. Wang was a rentier. Why did he and his fellow townsmen in Big Elmtree decide upon residence there instead of the county seat, where the walls were far higher and thicker, and the police and other forms of physical protection greater? Why did he and the others perversely refuse to move into the county seat and become conveniently classifiable as county-seat rentiers? After P'eng Yü-t'ing had carried out his revolution and made a mockery of the official county government, one of his first acts was to replace all of the ward heads with men of his personal relations network. His regime met stiff resistance from the power-holders in the county seat itself, comprised in part of the county seat rentiers. P'eng claimed that the county seat power-holders (whom he naturally called local bullies and evil gentry) resisted his new order because they hoped that resistance would bring his downfall and a restoration of power to the county government. They desired this, P'eng felt, because they were all part of the local-bully-evil-gentry-official-bandit-army "establishment," so a restoration of the county government's power would result in a restoration of the county government's power, which would in turn result in a restoration of the old back-scratching, symbiotic coalition.

What does this have to do with Big Landlord Wang of Big Elmtree? Wang was part of the "new" regime under P'eng, and was "elected" ward head of the second ward (the ward office located in Big Elmtree village). Why would the county seat rentiers oppose the newly powerful P'eng while Wang of Big Elmtree, also a rentier, supported him? Precisely for the same reason, I suspect, that Wang did not move into the county seat in the first place. He did not "belong," at least in the same way the county seat rentiers did, to the county seat establishment network of rentiers in collusion with other power-holders.

Now, as Philip Kuhn has pointed out, county-seat rentiers were more urbanized and cultivated than
smaller landlords in residence on the land, and so might be distinguished from "evil gentry" in both life style and size of holdings, and tend to be termed "gentry" (shen-shih). But in all references to them in materials on Chen-p'ing that P'eng's organization produced, they are "local bullies and evil gentry." What, however, of Wang of Big Elmtree? Could he have refrained from joining his fellow rentiers in the county seat because his holdings were recently acquired and he was not sufficiently urbanized to fit in? To judge from his appearance, this was not the case. He appears the very epitome of the urbanized leisured gentryman, attired in the curious de rigueur vesture of his class—a western-style fedora with Chinese ch'ang-p'ao ma-kua ensemble.

How then should we classify Wang: a local-bully/evil-gentry or a landlord-rentier? Since he qualified in life style and amount of holdings, he should be a landlord-rentier. But he was also an "evil gentry." Certainly he was one as far as the provincial government and the county seat rentiers were concerned. To his confederates of the "new" regime in the county, he was an "upright gentry."

When the remnants of the E-Yü-Wan Soviet passed through Wan-hsi in 1932, the local militias did not permit them the leisure to conduct rural surveys, but suppose that they had. Wang, of course, would have been classified as a landlord without question, because as far as the CCP was concerned, his landlord persona was more "significant" than his local-bully/evil-gentry guise. What if, however, during the great bandit raid the year before, Wang or some member of his family had been kidnapped, and he had been forced to sell most of his land to pay the ransom? In that case, in 1932, Wang might have been a local-bully/evil-gentry to the CCP. Of course, Wang might conceivably have seen the writing on the wall in 1929 after the August bandit raid and could have dug up his secret stash in the backyard, fled with fedora and family to the big city, and, with luck and some assistance from kin or clique already there, might have made it into the ranks of the bourgeoisie. Sic transit gloria latifundii!
The protean nature of the landlord-local-bully/evil-gentry relationship is, to an extent, simply a reflection of what seems to have been a radical increase in the fluidity in landholding itself during the Republican period. Certainly there was a decided increase in landlord "desertion" of the countryside for the physical security and other benefits afforded by residence in urban centers higher in the hierarchy of central places. Indeed, in certain areas, desertion was not limited to landlords. By the early 1930s, for example, literally half of all the arable land in Teng county had been completely depopulated because of rampant banditry. What is most interesting about the case, however, is what it indicates about the rapid turnover rates for the landlord class. In the four wards (out of a total of eight) that were not deserted, an entirely new large landlord class had emerged in the space of a few years. The four ward heads, who in 1933 were also the ward militia chiefs, had bought up huge amounts of land at low prices, so that each had become a very large landlord. Given what is known about the background of other militia heads of the area, it is likely that the four had started with little or no land at all, and may even have been (or still were) common bandits, but had parlayed a certain level of military skill and a personal relations network into positions as militia head, then ward head, and on to large landlord. There are reports from other parts of China which describe the emergence of a "new landlord class" composed of similar types. Naturally enough, there are reports from other areas of the emergence of a "new" local-bully/evil-gentry class, which, in its turn, might become a "new" landlord class at a later date.

My suggestion that Wang Shuo-ch'ing might have been dispossessed through kidnapping was not at all factitious. Rural kidnapping had assumed awesome proportions by the late 1920s, and had in fact, transformed many a landlord into a pauper. Significantly, much like the irregular tax-fining-extortion rackets operated by militia and local self-government chiefs, which also contributed to high land-tenure
turnover and landlord flight, the kidnapping business was often cloaked with some legitimacy derived from "the people," and almost never identified as plain unvarnished crime. One Manchurian band, in the late 1920s for example, retained the services (and the person) of a former chin-shih degree-holder specifically for the purpose of writing appropriately and elegantly worded ransom demands. The astounding growth of the rural kidnapping industry, which has been strangely ignored by historians, was undoubtedly one of the single most important factors affecting landlordism in some areas. A certain resident of rural Kiangsu (described as "intelligent") observed in 1923, "Old fashioned robbery has gone out of style and the practically universal system is kidnapping."

A prerequisite to embarking into the highly remunerative kidnapping business was some control over a body of men equipped with weapons and an inclination to use them. It is to a discussion of rural organized violence that we now turn.

Local-bullies/evil-gentry and organized violence. This relationship, more than the other two discussed above, was directly shaped by the loss of legitimacy and the absence of a legitimized institutional structure to which all power-holders could relate. Any and all forms of armed force could be, and indeed were, legitimized by "the people." We are quite familiar with the upper-level militarization phenomenon (warlordism) which persisted in one guise or another until the founding of the People's Republic, and with the generalization that in the Republican interregnum, armed force was the normal arbiter in the distribution of power and, to an extent, wealth. What has been neglected, however, is that precisely the same situation obtained down to the lowest levels. In the Republican period, I perceive a process whereby all forms of militarization at all levels gradually formed an almost undifferentiated amalgam. By the early 1920s, the distinctions were minimal in personnel, leadership, role, relationship
to local rural society, modes of operation, and organization among government armies, private armies, bandit organizations and, to a degree, party armies.

The relationship between local rural elites and these multi-form but essentially similar types of organized violence was, as expected, quite varied. Let us first look at the local militia (min-t'uan, t'uan-lien, lien-chuang, pao-wei-t'uan, etc.).

Contemporary commentators reported all manner of relationships between variously identified local elites and local militia. One common view was that the variant of the local-bully/evil-gentry called the "militia lord" was the cat's paw of the local landlord. This seems logical, since, as some observers pointed out, the landlord class provided most of the funds for militia weapons and expenses:63 "The various self-defense organizations are tools of the landlord class. The militia members are peasants driven into poverty, and they work for the interests of certain families."64 So, "although such terms as 'people's self-defense' and 'the masses armed' could not be nicer sounding," the reality was "armed landlords, not armed masses."65 In this view, then, the militia lord's interests were identical with those of the landlord class, and the latter was the former's master.

Another common view was that the militia lord was a tool of the militarists and officials, not the landlord class. So, a commentator notes, although the militia often spring up in righteous local self-defense against banditry:

It's a shame that warlords and officials . . . in seeking their own aggrandizement at the expense of others, sometimes despoil the people of their weapons and subvert the local militia; sometimes they use the militia as a pretext for getting money [from the people], sometimes, in order to turn the local militia into their own private army, they dispatch [their own] officials to lead them. In name, this is called 'reorganization' but in fact it is [equivalent to] forceable expropriation of the local militia.66
Other commentators, however, saw the process of local militia joining a militarist's network as a result of the leader's own ambitions. "After having beaten the bandits, the militia leaders are apt to become arrogant. They start bullying neighboring areas and treating local officials with a high hand. They use this [power base] to further their own ambitions and so become the appendage of some warlord."67

Yet another and equally common view was that militia lords were independent predators who used their power to fine, tax, and extort to enrich themselves at the expense of the landlord class. In this estimation, their behavior was similar to that of local self-government or county government functionaries who used their positions to extort to the point that "those bigger landlords (with several hundred mou of land) are also poor at the end of the year."68

The following contemporary description of a typical militia lord, interestingly enough, could well have been modeled on Wan-hsi's Pieh T'ing-fang; it fits him even in the details. Because of the absence of a uniform legitimacy standard, however, this description is delegitimizing, and, if actually applied to Pieh, would make him into an exploiter of "the people," and his various modernization projects into negative, gratuitous burdens upon them.

Sometimes a rover of the rivers and lakes will take advantage of the bandit problem to gather together the masses to resist. The people will acclaim him, and he garners a great reputation. He might even style himself "commander." Such a person forgets his origins and turns to wicked deeds. He will use local taxing power for construction projects, such as road-building. This sort of thing has really become a deep wound on the bone of the people, and does a lot of harm. The person will often go into a mountainous area, build a fort, collect arms and so prepare for future trouble . . . .

They fine, tax, and do other things at will, and the government lets them do it. Sometimes
others of this sort will link up into a clique embracing several counties, and so their reputations are even more deeply rooted, and there is no way of getting rid of them. The officials take their orders from them and so they are immune to official sanctions. There are such militia lords who oppress and burden the people ten times more than the government or soldiers. After their influence has been established in a locale, they have the money to buy officials, and they send their agents everywhere to control public opinion.  

Pieh himself and his own group, naturally, viewed themselves and their activities as legitimized by the same "people" that this commentator evokes as his standard. The "burdens" were, to Pieh et al., "rural reconstruction projects," and the multi-county "clique" was the leadership of a populist revolt against the rule of corrupt officials and warlords. Even more significant, the author of this description would have, I am certain, vigorously denied that it applied to Pieh. It happens that he was linked to Pieh by a series of interlocking personal relations networks which, however convoluted, were sufficiently close to insure that he would have viewed Pieh as a legitimate local self-government leader, rural reconstructor, and a virtuous and wise local worthy, not as a militia lord.

There were myriad variations of the relationship between local elite and militia lord. A typical case, which through an accident of history is quite well known, is that of the militia leaders Wang Cho and Ai Wen-ts'ai, who were the dominant power-holders in the Chingkangshan area when Mao and his tattered remnants of the Autumn Harvest Uprising army arrived in late 1927. Although the CCP regarded them as "bandits," they had been functioning quite nicely as "local militia leaders" for some time. Prior to the CCP's arrival, they had altered their operations slightly to work an outright protection racket on the local landlords.  

All they had done
was shift from semi-protector of the landlord class to pure predator against the landlord class. One imagines that such shifts which, after all, might not affect anything in the nature of the "militia" leadership itself or its essential relationship to the community, were going on continuously.

Many contemporary commentators observed that any line between (illegitimate) bandit gangs and (legitimate) local militia was simply nonexistent, because, ultimately, there was no legitimized authority to make the distinction. A militia lord and a bandit chief were in effect the same entity with the same attributes. The militia lord might have a title, either self-designated (Pieh T'ing-fang, for instance, styled himself "commander"—ssu-ling) or from some "official" agency, but such a title was also often used by bandit chiefs even during periods when they were self-acknowledged bandits.

Both bandit chiefs and militia chiefs claimed legitimization from "the people," and the power of both ultimately rested on control over similar groups of armed men. Even bandit chiefs who were openly bandit were often indistinguishable from militia chiefs in their mode of operations and sources of income. Many bandit chiefs supported themselves with regularized land surtaxes and charges levied on the inhabitants (naturally, especially the landlords) of their area. Whatever their ultimate origin—strong arms, enforcers, "pure" bandits, parvenu local bullies evil gentry—they often appear to have been totally independent of the landlord class and local officials, or to have actually dominated them.

In a time without a legitimized elite, even those who operated without the benefit of a title (such as self-proclaimed and commonly recognized bandits) performed precisely as the former degree and office holding elite had. There are cases, for example, of bandits holding regularized "courts" for the mediation of local disputes. Their claim to legitimacy for such actions was from "the people" through the greenwood tradition and Republican populism.
Did control of organized violence and a subjective legitimation based upon "the people," however, really transform an illiterate "rover of the lakes and rivers" into the social equal (or superior) of local power-holders from much higher social backgrounds? In many cases, it apparently did, ultimately because of China's general cultural crisis and disintegration of the old rural social fabric. It is quite obvious that Pieh T'ing-fang, for example, was treated as the social equal of highly educated Wan-hsi people of impeccable background, and later, of many outside the Wan-hsi area.

Even more surprising is the apparent social equality of "outright" bandits with the "gentry" of their areas. There is an interesting case of a small-scale Shantung bandit chief (at the time without commission or title of any sort) whose very name, Li San-mao (Li "Three-hairs"), would indicate that he was of low social origin and probably illiterate. Li had kidnapped a young woman whose family had refused to ransom her. (A female hostage's ransom potential evaporated if she was kept overnight, so she was appropriately termed a "fast ticket"—k'uai-p'iao—in greenwood jargon.) Apparently loathe to take a total loss on the deal, Three Hairs elected to marry his erstwhile captive. He observed his entry into conjugal bliss with a gala three day nuptial fete which was attended not only by greenwood brothers of the area, but also by the local gentry, the rich town merchants, and the county magistrate!

Obviously, if there was no objective standard of legitimacy, then all competing claims were of equal status, and the only basis for power was control over some form of armed force. Bandits, then, were as legitimate as officials, generals, militia chiefs, or local self-government leaders, all of which they became with regularity. The peasantry, as usual, directly captured the essence of the entire situation succinctly in such rhyming folk ditties as:

If a mandarin you would be, go out and organize codottieri

(Yao tso kuan ch'ü la kan).
(or) If you want to be a mandarin, first become boss of highwaymen.
(Or) If you want to ride in a sedan chair, then first some hostages you must snare.79

With the possible exception of core areas with large, well-defined lineages, it would seem that there was no inevitable "natural" alliance between militia chiefs and any other classifiable local power-holder, including landlords. Rather, it seems that militia lords would ally themselves with or against anyone, depending upon the particular situation at the time in the locale. It does seem logical, however, that militia lords added to their landholdings after they achieved power, as the militia chiefs cum ward heads did in Teng county.

Are there any analytical categories through which we might systematically relate local elites to organized rural violence? Recently a political scientist who has done extensive research on the question has advanced an arresting hypothesis which deserves examination. Various forms of organized violence in rural modern China are categorized into two modal types:

The first, to be termed the predatory strategy, was a form of behavior aimed at expanding the resources of some members of the community at the expense of others. It ranged from theft, smuggling and feuds to organized banditry. The reaction against such assaults, the protective strategy, constitutes the second modal type. It includes crop-watching societies, construction of fortifications, private vigilantes, village militia and defensive religious sects. . . . Typically, the predatory strategy was undertaken by those with few material possessions, who had relatively less to forfeit and more to gain by this high-risk behavior. . . . The protective response, by contrast, was generally led by those who did have something to lose and the wherewithal to defend it.80

The distinction, it would appear, works well for
the nineteenth century, but with the Republic and the consequent loss of a single objective standard for legitimacy, the extreme vertical mobility of local elites, and the fluidity inherent in the local political arena, the distinction between predatory and defensive organized violence cannot be made very easily. A capacity for protective action was also a capacity for predatory action, and could be legitimized as somehow for "the people." Local militia, as we have seen, were often former or future bandits (and, according to some authorities' or observers' criteria, always bandits) and certainly tended toward predatory behavior. In many areas, wealthy households, which should have been supporting defensive organized violence to protect what they had, often secretly directed or cooperated with purely predatory bandit gangs operating in their vicinity. Such households "invested" in a bandit gang by providing arms (sometimes only overnight, sometimes for longer periods and sometimes by permanent loan) and receiving a fixed portion of the profits. They also acted as a fence for stolen goods, or collaborated with the bandits in other ways. Indeed, almost every classification of rural resident cooperated or collaborated with bandits, even during their periods without militia title, army commission, or any other legitimizing designation.

What of defensive semi-religious organizations (hui), such as the Red, Green, or Black Spears, Tsai-shan hui, and any of the myriad other such groups? Could they at least be considered purely defensive organized violence? In my opinion, they are the closest approximation of the "protective response" organization in the Republican period. Unlike local militia groups, they always arose in direct proportion to the strength of external forces—whether bandits, armies, officials, or foreign invaders—rather than in direct proportion to the available spoils.

Having said that, however, we must immediately note that even such organizations do not fit the protective mode entirely. Being at least semi-religious, they would, for at least semi-religious reasons, engage in such non-protective behavior as wholesale
massacre of Moslems, Heavenly Gate Society (T'ien-men hui) members, and the like. Nor were they totally immune to the temptations of extortion and simple robbery exactly as practiced by militia and bandits. More than one contemporary commentator regarded the leaders as plain bandits who "assemble ignorant déclassé elements and promote the development of bandit power to greater degrees." According to another assessment:

After the bandits have been cleared out [groups such as the Spear organizations'] power increases until some irregularities occur. Crime is committed because they forget their original purpose. The leaders of the Spear type organizations become arrogant and lord it over other people, do not participate in production, and become bandits.

Yet another commentator notes that: "At the very beginning, they [the Spear type societies] indeed maintained order and peace for their localities. But they soon created disturbances and turned bandit in the end." Various Szechwanese equivalents to the Spears organizations, such as the Divine Soldiers (Shen-ping) and their apparent successors—the Divine Bandits (Shen-fei)—were decidedly predatory at least some of the time.

It is undoubtedly true that the semi-religious defense groups did not prey upon members of their own village or market area, but this does not particularly distinguish them from other clearly predatory organizations such as bandit gangs. Even in imperial times, there had been isolated areas near provincial borders which were totally outside the influence of the imperial bureaucracy or, to a degree, orthodox power-holders. The power in these areas, which were "gentry poor" anyway, was often in various greenwood or secret society hands. In some cases, most of the entire adult population engaged in full- or part-time banditry. Because of the absence of effective governments at either the central or provincial levels and because of the delegitimization of various forms of authority, areas of this sort increased dramatically during
the Republic. I would estimate, for instance, that one-fifth to one-third (depending upon the time) of Honan's total area approached this condition. Usually termed "The areas to which the three provincial, prefectural and county authorities paid no attention or over which they had no control" (san pu kuan) these areas appeared in a greater variety of places during the Republic, such as in any region which fell between the spheres of local militarists or parties, or, during the war with Japan, in the "no-man's land" between Japanese and Chinese lines. As "the rabbit does not eat the grass around its own warren" (t'u pu ch'ih wo pien ts'ao), so too did the armed bands of these areas seldom raid their home areas. A classic example is in the mountainous region of western Honan, where the bands regularly ventured onto the eastern plain to plunder, yet functioned in a purely defensive mode in their own areas. They were thus predatory and peri-petatic while also stationary and defensive. Sometimes the leaders of these bands held commissions from some army or government; sometimes they did not. In both cases, they combined the greenwood ethic with the new populism to legitimize their exactions.

All in all, one is forced to conclude that there was little except scale by which to distinguish the various forms of organized violence in rural Republican China. Indeed, even scale is not that reliable a distinction. Militia, bandit gangs, units of government armies, semi-religious self-defense organizations all regularly formed horizontal alliances which in effect quickly and dramatically altered their scale. These alliances could last for one operation or for years.

One objection to this paper might well be that the material is not representative of economic core areas in proximity to the KMT national government of the late 1930s and 1940s. A recent case study of Szechwan (mostly of economic core areas) during the war with Japan (when the central government was quite close indeed) comes to a conclusion about the nature of local power which, while somewhat different from my own in approach and emphasis, is similar enough to support my own findings:

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Orthodox authority in the persons of hsiang chiefs and pao-chia leaders was frequently indistinguishable from the informal or "illegitimate" authority wielded by bandit chieftains, secret society leaders or "local bullies and rotten gentry" (t'u-hao lieh-shen). The line between formal and informal authority was unclear . . . . The second point is that, search as modern scholars may for accurate labels and neat distinctions among local power-holding groups, these categorizations are likely to remain blurred.88

This is a rather negative conclusion; one might even call it discouraging. At this point, my own probing seems only to have muddled the waters and it will take more reflection to see anything more clearly. I seem to have only negative conclusions to offer:

1) The definitions, distinctions and descriptions to which we are accustomed in studying rural Republican Chinese power-holders are not very precise or useful.
2) There seems to have been a basic qualitative change from the imperial era in local rural power-holders, their social and economic identity, and the nature of their power.
3) No generalizations seem possible at this time concerning the precise nature of that change.
4) Organized violence was the ultimate arbiter of the allotment of power and, to an extent, wealth;
5) All forms of organized violence tended to form an amalgam so that few universally valid distinctions could be drawn among them.
6) All of the above phenomena were directly affected by the relativity of legitimacy during the period.
7) The single most important feature that distinguishes the Republican interregnum from periods of disunity and disorder in China's imperial past is modern nationalism and the ideas associated with it.
8) More local histories are necessary before
broader generalizations about the local rural Republican elite are possible.

If I were to make any generalization about the nature of local power-holders in the Republic, it would be similar to the view of some contemporary observers that the new local elite were "sly cunning people" whose personalities, precisely like those power-holders on higher levels, were simply "adept at coping with a rapidly changing environment" and "grasping opportunities for self-aggrandizement." In other words, perhaps the only shared characteristics of the new elite was their ability to perceive that a single, objective standard of legitimacy was gone, that authority was up for grabs; and their possession of the ruthlessness, boldness, and Machiavellian suppleness to act successfully upon this perception.

NOTES

1. This paper is a preliminary report on research still in progress. My discussion of many issues, including legitimacy, is somewhat simplified and ignores many important related problems. Throughout the paper there is more supporting evidence than can be economically included here, but I would be willing to correspond with anyone interested.


3. CKSH, p. 237; Cheng-yang hsien-chih (Gazetteer of Cheng-yang county), chuan 3, p. 50; KK, p. 242. Consider, for example, the case of Pai Lang (the "White Wolf"), an extraordinarily talented West Honan bandit whose remarkable, if truncated, career as a major political actor began with support from the Royalist party (Tsung-she tang) immediately after
the Republican revolution. He apparently abandoned his royalist supporters when the Kuomintang offered him Republican legitimacy and material support as well as the governship of Honan. (The Kuomintang hoped to use the White Wolf in its struggle against Yuan Shih-k'ai.) Yet even after White Wolf arrayed himself in Republican legitimacy, there was widespread rural support for him in the expectation that he was the emerging Son of Heaven. See STSP June 30, 1913, p. 3; Mar. 1, 1914, p. 11; Min-li-pao, May 6, 1913, p. 8. On Pai Lang's relations with the Royalist party and the Kuomintang, see STSP, July 21, 1912, p. 4; June 30, 1913, p. 3; July 26, 1913, p. 4; Aug. 17, 1913, p. 8; Aug. 21, 1913, p. 8; Oct. 12, 1913, p. 8; Oct. 17, 1913, p. 8; Oct. 25, 1913, p. 8; Apr. 3, 1914, p. 4; Feb. 17, 1914, p. 8; NCH, Aug. 9, 1913, p. 450; Nov. 8, 1913, p. 411; Mar. 21, 1914, p. 846; Chin-tai-shih tzu-liao (Materials on Modern History; Peking), no. 3 (1956):121.

4. The emergence in the twentieth century of fei as the most common term for illegitimate powerholder is, I think, significant. It seems, more than the other designations for bandit (k'ou, tao, tsei, etc.), to imply the legitimacy of the user.

5. PYT, p. 1; see also, KK, p. 194.

6. KK, pp. 167-264; and PYT, pp. 1-77.


8. For example, see Min-li-pao, Apr. 26, 1913, p. 10; May 6, 1913, p. 8; June 26, 1913, p. 6; CWR, June 16, 1923, p. 64; U.S. Department of State, Records Relating to Internal Affairs of China, 1910-1927, Mayer (Peking) to Washington, no. 2923 (Apr. 21, 1925).

9. Chu Hsin-fan, Chung-kuo nung-ts'un ching-chi kuan-hsi chi ch'i t'e-chih (Economic relationships

10. LL, p. 278, 276; see also pp. 274-78; CW, pp. 157, 194-200.


12. CW, p. 351.

13. CW, p. 164.

14. STSP, July 18, 1914, p. 3; also see STSP, June 17, 1914, p. 2, for comment upon this phenomenon.

15. CKSH, p. 264.


17. This tendency might be said to have originated, ultimately, with Confucius himself, who steadfastly refused to define the state of moral perfection (jen) in abstract, objective terms. From his remarks
recorded in the Analects, Confucius seems to have considered jen to vary according to each individual's concrete situation. Thus, action manifesting jen varied with each specific situation faced by the individual.

18. Fei Hsiao-t'ung, Hsiang-t'u Chung-kuo (Rural China) (Shanghai, 1948), pp. 24-36.

night), Chuan-chi wen-hsueh (Biographical literature; Taipei), 16.4.

20. KK, p. 256.
22. CKSH, p. 264.
24. Ibid.
26. WSH, p. 52.


29. KK, pp. 147, 167, 169-172, 241, 247; WHC, p. 42; Hsu Ying-lien et al., eds., Ch'uan-kuo hsiang-ts'un chien-she, p. 512; K'ung Hseuh-hsiung, Chung-kuo chin-jih chih nung-ts'un yun-tung (Present day Chinese rural movement) (Shanghai, 1934), pp. 181-187; Liang Chung-hua, "Chen-p'ing tsu-chih chih niao-k'an" (An overview of Chen-p'ing self-government), pp. 5-7, 20, in CPCN; Yen Shen-hsiu, "P'eng Yu-t'ing hsien-sheng ko-jen chih tsu-chih shih-lueh" (A brief account of M. P'eng Yu-t'ing's self-government work), pp. 1-2, in CPCN; PYT, pp. 49-52, 60-62; Ju Ch'un-p'u, "Chieh-shao i ko jen-min tsu-tung pan-li ti hsien tsu-chih" (Introducing a case of county self-government managed by the people on their own initiative), Hsiang-ts'un chien-she (Rural reconstruction) 2.17-18 (Jan. 21, 1933):3. I suspect that P'eng's family might have had some greenwood connections because rural medicine shops are an important component of the "rivers and lakes" world and
because of his close personal connection with Chang Chih-chiang, a person with such connections and an important secret society figure. Chang was also a noted devotee of the traditional Chinese martial arts, which fits into the usual pattern: rivers lakes—rural medicine—martial arts.

30. See CPCN; and KK, especially pp. 1-10, 147, 162-168, 223-224, 238, 249-250; Ju Ch'un-p'u, "Chieh-shao," pp. 23-24; K'ung Hsueh-hsiung, Chin-jih chih hsiang-ts'un chien-she, pp. 186, 188, 194-195; Hsu Ying-ling et al., eds., Ch'uan-kuo hsiang-ts'un chien-she, pp. 488-491, 512, 513; WHC, pp. 1, 42, 45, 53-54, 67, 84, 100, 176; HNS, pp. 107, 109; Chung-kuo ti-fang tsu-chih jen-wu chih, pp. 263, 264. It is interesting to speculate what would have become of P'eng if he had been allowed to live out his normal life span. I think it is entirely possible that he would have ended up allied with the CCP during the war with Japan. His nephew P'eng Hsueh-feng (original name Hsiu-ch'iang), a CCP member whom he had put through school and with whom he was apparently quite close, rose to prominence in S. E. Honan and Huai-pei as a guerrilla commander and was largely responsible for expansion of Communist power in that area. P'eng Yü-t'ing's brother and other family members did visit Hsueh-feng during the war, and one relative stayed with him in East Honan to join the Party. See Chung-kuo kung-ch'an-tang lieh-shih-chuan (Biographies of CCP martyrs) (Hong Kong, 1949), pp. 183-198; Chang Chih-yu and Chang Chen, "Tao Hsueh-feng t'ung-chih" (Mourning for comrade Hsueh-feng), Chieh-fang jih-pao (Liberation daily), Feb. 8, 1945; Ho-nan ko-ming lieh-shih hui-i-lu (Reminiscences of Honan's revolutionary martyrs) (Chengchou, 1960), pp. 37-38, 69-70.

31. The personal relations networks formed through these alumni associations (t'ung-hsueh-hui) were used by the Mass Education Association to support and, in some cases, carry out its various programs in education, agricultural technological diffusion, public health and so on. Through such groups the Mass Education Association made itself part of the local scene.

32. Li Ming-ching, "P'ing-chiao-hui yu Ting hsien" (The
association for promotion of popular education and Ting county), TLPL, no. 79 (Dec. 3, 1933):18; see also Yen Shu-t'ang, "P'ing-chiao-hui yü Ting hsien (The association for promotion of popular education and Ting county), TLPL, no. 74 (Oct. 29, 1933):3-8.


34. WSH, p. 62.
35. CW, p. 198.
36. CW, p. 199.
37. LL, p. 276.
38. CW, p. 198.

40. Liang Chung-hua, "Chen-p'ing tzu-chih chih niao-k'an," pp. 10-12; Chao Te-ch'ing, "P'eng Yü-t'ing hsien-sheng chih cheng-chih," pp. 5-6, in CPCN; PYT, p. 67; KK, pp. 223-224, 237; Hsu Ying-lien et al., eds., Ch'üan-kuo hsiang-ts'ün chien-she, pp. 490-491; WHC, pp. 10, 176-177.


43. T'ien Jan, "Wu-hsi ch'un-fa t'ung-chih hsia chih Chang-te" (Chang-te under the Wu P'ei-fu warlord clique), Hsiang-tao chou-pao, no. 168 (August 1926):1699; SDK, pp. 172, 278; NT, p. 63; STSP, Oct. 10, 1913, p. 8; Oct. 17, 1913, p. 8; Nov. 13, 1913, p. 2; NCH, June 9, 1923, p. 658; Min-li pao, June 28, 1913, p. 10; CKSH, pp. 222, 259; Yano Jin-nichi, "Shina dohi ron" (On Chinese bandits) Gaikō Jihō (Foreign policy review), no. 458 (1924):42, 45; Yano Jin-nichi, "Shina no dohi" (Chinese bandits) in Gendai Shina ron
(Introduction to modern China), 2 vols. (Tokyo, 1936), I, 178; Wanatabe Ryūsaku, Bazoku (Horse bandits) (Tokyo, 1964), p. 63; Wang T'ien-chinag, "Shih-chiu shih-chi hsia-pan ch'i Chung-kuo ti mi-mi hui-she" (Secret societies in China during the latter half of the nineteenth century), Li-shih yen-chiu (Historical studies), no. 2 (1963):85.

44. HNS, p. 109; Ho Hsi-ya, Chung-kuo tao-fei wen-t'i chih yen-chiu (Study of the problem of China's bandits) (Shanghai, 1925), p. 34; SDK, pp. 129, 172.

45. HN, p. 63.


47. NT, p. 62.

48. HNS, pp. 8, 113; PYT, pp. 51-52. Apparently the biggest landlord in the county was Wang Ta-ching of the fourth ward, Yuan-ying village. KK, p. 240.


50. The county seat did have a rentier class of "gentry." Wang Ta-ching, for instance, lived in the county seat and not in his home village of Yuan-ying, even though it, like Ta-Yü-shu ts'un, was a landlord village. PYT, p. 52; HNS, p. 110.

51. KK, p. 8, 232, 246; PYT, pp. 43-45, 51-56.

52. KK, p. 14


54. KK, first pages of pictures, unnumbered.

55. SDK, p. 143; Chang Chieh-hou, "Huai-pei nung-ming," p. 75; HNS, p. 5; Chu Hsin-fan, Chung-kuo nung-ts'un, pp. 306-308; Ch'ien Chia-chü ed., Chung-kuo nung-ts'un ching-chi lun-wen-chi (Collected essays on the Chinese rural economy) (Shanghai, 1936), pp. 16-18, 26; CY 2.11

56. HNS, p. 109, 117; WHC, p. 178.


63. LL, pp. 277-278; CW, p. 199.

64. NT, pp. 60-61.

65. Ibid.; LL, p. 278.

66. HN, pp. 51-52.

67. NT, p. 74.

68. Tachibana Shiraki, Dohi (Bandits) (Tientsin, 1923), 271.
69. NT, pp. 80-81.

70. Smedley, The Great Road, p. 227; Smedley, China's Red Army Marches, pp. 64-66.


72. HNS, pp. 115-116.

73. Ho Hsi-ya, Chung-kuo tao-fei, p. 34.


76. Tachibana, Dohi, pp. 72-73; HN, p. 52.

77. The name "San-mao" was probably given to Li because of thinning hair and, because of its crudeness, indicates illiteracy and low social background. The name might also be used to indicate sibling order, so that it would be translated "the third." This use of "mao" is limited to South China, however, and so would not have been used in this sense in Shantung.

79. SDK, p. 178; WHC, p. 33.


82. Suemitsu Takayoshi, Shina no himitsu kessha to jizen kessha (Secret societies and philanthropic societies in China) (Dairen, 1932), pp. 122-123; Ozawa Moichi, Shina no dōron to Santō no son (Rural Shantung and the disturbances in China) (Dairen, 1930), p. 99.


84. HN, p. 49.

85. NT, p. 70.

86. CWR 80.13 (May 29, 1937):498.

87. The famous, and probably mythical robber mentioned in many ancient works (such as the Mencius, the Chuang-tzu, the works of Hsun-tzu and the Shih-chi) as a representative figure of a great bandit, Tao Chih, was actually worshipped in temples erected to his honor in peripheral areas throughout the imperial era. As large segments of the population in these areas were at least
part-time bandits, Tao Chih was the patron god of a "craft," in the same way that Hua-t'ou was the patron deity for the medical profession and Lu-pan was the patron deity for the construction trade. On Tao Chih, The Cambridge History of China, vol. 10, Late Ch'ing, 1800-1911, Part I, p. 457. On "san-pu-kuan" areas and bandit-dominated areas (bandit villages, etc.) in the Republic, see SDK, pp. 66, 199; Ju Ch'un-p'u, "Chieh-shao," p. 3; CWR 80.13 (May 29, 1937): 498; Gotô Asatarô. Seiryūtō, pp. 21, 36; HN, p. 48; NCH, Mar. 5, 1927, p. 388; STSP, June 6, 1911, Oct. 22, 1913, p. 9; Harvey J. Howard, Ten Weeks, p. 61; Tachibana, Dohi, p. 62; Smedley, The Great Road, p. 136; Chu Hsin-fan, Chung-kuo nung-ts'un, pp. 306, 320, 337.


ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE NOTES

CKSH Nagano Akira, Chung-kuo she-hui tsu-chih (Chinese social organization), Chu Chia-ch'ing, trans. (Shanghai, 1932).

CPCN Chen-p'ing tsu-chih chih chi-nien (Commemorative on Chen-p'ing self-government) Yen Shen-hsiu, ed. (n.p., 1934).

CW Liang Shu-ming, Chung-kuo min-tsu tsu-chiu yun-tung chih tsui-hou chueh-wu (Final Awakening of the Chinese people's self-salvation movement), (Shanghai, 1932).

CWR China Weekly Review (Shanghai).

CY Chung-yuan wen-hsien (Documents on Honan) (Taipei).

HN Wu Shih-hsun, Ho-nan (Honan province) (Shanghai, 1927).

HNS Ho-nan sheng nung-ts'un tiao-ch'a (Rural survey of


NCH North China Herald (Shanghai).

NT Wang I-k'o, Nung-ts'un tzu-wei yen-chiu (Rural self-defense) (Kaifeng, 1932).

PYT "P'eng Yü-t' ing hsien-sheng kuan-yü tzu-chih chih chiang-yen" (Mr. P'eng Yü-t' ing's speeches on self-government). Separate pagination in CPCN.


STSP Shun-t'ien shih-pao (The Shun-t'ien times) (Peking).

TFTC Tung-fang tsa-chih (Eastern miscellany) (Shanghai).

TLPL Tu-li p'ing-lun (The independent critic) (Peking).

WHC Shen Ch'ing-pi, Wan-hsi Ch'en Shun-te hsien-sheng chuan (Biography of Mr. Ch'en Shun-te of Wan-hsi) (Taipei, 1976).
Chang Ch'un-ming 張続いて
hsiao ching-chi 小經紀
hsien-cheng ya-shui 縣徵牙税
hu-shou 解手
i-chi 義集
k'o-ch'eng 課程
kung-i chüan 公益捐
liang-chan 糧棧
lou-kuei 隘規
niu-lu 牛驢
pao-shui jen 包税人
san-shang 散商
shang-chüan 商捐
Shang-hui 商會
shang-jen pao-cheng 商人包徵
shih-chi 市集
t'an-k'uan 攤款
T'ang-kuan-t'un 唐官屯
tou-tien 斗店
tsung t'ou-mu 總頭目
ya-chi 牙紀
ya-hang 牙行
ya-hang ying-yu 牙行盈餘
ya-shui 牙稅
ya-t'ieh shui 牙帖稅
ya-/tsa 牙雜
ying-yeh shui 營業稅
ching-cheng-ch'u  經徵處
ching-chi 經紀
chuan-k'uan 專款
ching-k'ung 京控
chün-chiá 均甲
chün-mou 均敵
chün-t'ien chün-i 均田均役
fu-chia-shui 附加税
hsiang-kuei 鄉規
hsiang-she 鄉社
hsieh-t'ü 協圖
hsin-cheng 新政
huo-hao 火耗
i-chi 義集
i-t'ü 義圖
k'o 科
kuei 櫃
kuei-chi 詭計
kun-tan 漲單
kung-k'uan-so 公款所
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ya-hang

ya-t'ieh
an-chü le-yeh 安居樂業
chai-chu 寨主
Chang Chih-chiang 張之江
ch'ang-p'ao ma-kua 長袍馬褂
Chen-chu 真主
Chen-p'ing 鎮平
cheng-shen 正紳
ch'eng wang pai k'ou 成王敗寇
chiang-hu 江湖
Chiao Chi-hsun 焦繼勳
chieh-fu chi-ch'iuung 初富濟窮
chin-shih 進士
chü-k'uei 巨魁
Chü Chang 禪章
chü-shen 巨紳
chü-tu 巨蠹
ch'un-chung 羣象
e-pa 惡霸
E-yü-wan 鄂豫皖
Fei 匪
fei-kuan 匪官
fei-ping 匪兵
fu-hao 富豪
hao-chieh 豪傑
hao-han 好漢
hao-k'o 豪客
ho-k'ou 河寇
Ho-nan ching-kuo-chiin ssu-ling 河南靖國軍司令
Hou-chi 侯集
hsiang-hsien 鄉賢
hsiang-ma 响馬
hsien-liang 賢良
hsien-ta 賢達
hsien-yen 賢彦
hu-ma-fei 湖馬匪
Huang T'ien-pa 黃天霸
hui 會
i 義
jen 仁
kan-fei 關匪
kao-ma-fei 高碼匪

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ku-fei
Kuo Yuan-chen
Kuo Chin
k'uai-p'iao
lao chiang-hu
lao-t'ang
Li San-mao
Liang Shu-ming
lien-chuang
liu-k'ou
liu-tsei
lü-lin
lü-lin hao-han
min-t'uan
ming-shih
Ning Hsi-ku
Pai Lang
pang-fei
pang-k'o
pao
pao-wei-t'uan
p'ao chiang-hu te

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P'eng Yu-t'ing 彭禹廷
P'eng Hsueh-feng (Hsiu-tao) 彭雪楓（修道）
P'eng kung an 彭公案
piao-k'o 鑄客
Pieh T'ing-fang (Hsiang-chai) 别庭芳（香齋）
San-hsia wu i 三俠五義
san pu kuan 三不管
shan-chai-wang 山寨王
shan-fei 山匪
shen 紳
shen-ch'i 紳耆
Shen-fei 神匪
Shen-ping 神兵
shen-shih 紳士
shih-shen 士紳
shuo-shih 碩士
so-wei 所謂
Sun Mei-yao 孫美瑶
Sung K'o 宋克
Ta-yü-shu-ts'un 大榆樹村
t'an-kuan wu-li 貪官污吏
t'ang-chiang 瞞豺
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Tao Chih 盜跖
tao-fei 盜匪
Tao-k'o 刀客
Teng 鄧
ti-fang jen-shih 地方人士
ti-p'i 地痞
T'ien-ti-hui 天地會
ts'ao-se ying-hsiung 草色英雄
ts'ao-tse ying-hsiung 草澤英雄
tsei-fei 賊匪
tsei-k'ou 賊寇
tsou lu-lin 走綠林
Tsu Ti 祖逖
Tsung-she-tang 宗社黨
t'u-fei 土匪
t'u-fei shih 土匪式
t'u-hao lieh-shen 土豪劣紳
t'u pu ch'ih wo pien ts'ao 免不吃窩邊草
T'uan-fa (pa) 團賊 (霸)
t'uan-lien 團練
t'uan-tsung 團總
t'ung-hsueh-hui 同學會
Wan-hsi 窮西
Wang Shuo-ch'ing 王頤卿
Wang Ta-ching 王大經
Wang T'ien-tsung 王天縱
wei 僖
wu-ch'an chieh-chi 無產階級
wu-wei 無為
Yao tso kuan ch'ü la kan 要做官,去拉桿
yu-ch'iang chieh-chi 有槍階級
yu-hsia 游俠
yu-tsei 游賊