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Identifying Mistakes to Discipline a New State:

The Rectification Campaigns in China's Land Reform, 1946-1952

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Sociology

by

Jiangsui HE

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Professor Richard Madsen, Chair
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2008

The Dissertation of Jiangsui HE is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for
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University of California, San Diego

2008

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Identifying Mistakes to Discipline a New State:
The Rectification Campaigns in China's Land Reform, 1946-1952

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology
University of California, San Diego, 2008
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Although the centralized bureaucracy characterized the imperial state of China, the imperial did not establish a thorough and direct control over the rural area. Chinese communists continued the efforts of various state-builders—the reformers of the Qing court, the Nationalists, and the Japanese—to build up a strong modern state.

In 1946-1952, Chinese communists launched land reform over through China. They claimed to solve the land inequality in countryside through redistributing land. However, this land reform was neither merely for land nor simply about land. Chinese

communists endeavored to build up a new state at the grassroots level through the redistribution of land. During this process, the identification and correction of mistakes was a constant agenda. This dissertation argues that the rectification campaigns played a vital role in the communists' efforts to build up a modern state.

This dissertation examines the land reform processes of three villages—Xigou, Beiwan, and Nancun. These three villages were taken over by the communists one after another, and their land reform projects were under the guidance of different directives. Therefore, the examination on the land reform projects in these three villages could bring out an overall study on the 1946-1952 communist land reform, from the beginning to the conclusion. In all these three villages, the rectification campaigns were carried out to correct the mistakes of previous campaigns.

This dissertation argues that through identifying and correcting mistakes in previous steps, the rectification campaigns provided chances for the communists to educate and train the villagers, local cadres, and policy-makers. These normalizing trainings in the 1946-1952 land reform functioned as a disciplinary revolution for the nascent state, which facilitated the communists to ground their power over local communities.

Preface

Rectifications and China's Land Reform

“Our villagers hanged the district officials over the door. Those corrupt guys were supposed to distribute the items confiscated from the landlords to us. But they took the valuable items for their own interests. The district officials were so corrupt. But later on the county committee kept on saying that our villagers did something wrong.”¹ In the summer of 1997, fifty years after the land reform campaigns launched in Xigou, Ma Yujun, a leading figure in the village since land reform, described the land reform projects to a group of researchers. Yujun was supposed to talk about the redistribution of land or other properties. It would not be so shocked if Yujun talked about the struggle against the Ma landlords who owned almost every inch of land in the village. However, Yujun provided a story about the struggle against the communist local cadres instead.

A similar story happened during the fieldworks in Beiwan in 1998. In an interview with Zhao Zhengxin, the head of village military during the land reform remarked: “the land redistribution project went very well in our village. But after that, Qiong Wang took charge. And then it came the rectification campaign. The villagers who complained him were labeled as landlord and were even struggled.”² Zhengxin's story about Beiwan shared some similarities with Yujun's story about Xigou. Instead of the achievements of land reform, such as the land redistribution to the landless, these

¹ From interview, XG199708223MYJ.

² From interview, BW199807102ZZX.

accounts focus on the mistakes occurring during the land reform project at the grassroots level. It was obvious that these awkward situations impressed local people.

The rectification campaigns were part of the official accounts on the successful land reform, but remained only refrains of the theme. Yujun and Zhengxin nonetheless suggest the rectifications far more important. The significant role of the rectifications in land reform has been endorsed by He Shengcai in his first interview in 2004. Shengcai was the assistant head of Nancun in the land redistribution but was purged right after the rectification started. “No one was labeled as landlords in the land redistribution step. Most of land here was clan properties. It was the rectification campaign where six households were claimed as the landlords, causing some to committed suicide.”³

According to Shengcai, the land redistribution project did not initiate great social changes in Nancun. It was the rectification campaign that finally turned the village upside down.

Based on the stories of the three village leading figures, the rectification campaigns were important steps in the land reform in rural China. The identification and correction of mistakes were not merely a refrain, but a theme as well as the redistribution of land. Moreover, land reform was carried out over through China with the gradual takeover of the Communists. The land reform projects in these three villages were launched one after another. The stories of these three villages represent the three main phases of the land reform process over China. Then a more interesting question would be raised based on these three stories. It seems that the communists continuously made mistakes in the land reform. The previous campaigns to identify and correct mistakes did not prevent the errors in the future campaigns. Liu Shaoqi, the top state leader who

³ From interview, NC200407221HSC.

directed land reform over through, once writes, “We should not be afraid of mistakes ... As long as mistakes are corrected, the truth will be found out.”⁴ It was cited from a speech that Liu made in the national assembly on land reform. The communists were very aware of the mistakes in land reform, and even emphasized the positive function of the mistakes. Therefore, the mistakes and the corrections characterized land reform and the overall state-building project of Chinese communists.

In the 1946-52 land reform, Chinese communists claimed to solve the land inequality in countryside through redistributing land in the village. However, this land reform was neither merely for land nor simply about land. In the land reform project, the land redistribution was just part of social transformations that the communists initiated over the countryside. Through initiating these transformations, the communists endeavored to build up their power from grassroots. The village government and other organizations were set up, and the party members were recruited. However, the establishment of state apparatus was just one part of the formation of a modern state. The rectification campaigns brought the ordinary villagers, local cadres, and the top policy-makers all into one picture. Therefore, the rectification campaigns in land reform provide chances to study how the communist state could function at the grassroots.

In Foucaultian studies, discipline refers to the technology of surveillance, which interrupts, trains and surveils the individuals, and then drives all individuals into the way toward normalization.⁵ This dissertation emphasizes the corrective aspect of discipline.

⁴ Liu Shaoqi, “Zai quanguo tudi huiyi shang de jielun” [The summary speech in the land congress, 在全国土地会议上的结论] (1947/09/13). In Liu, Shaoqi, 1981, *Liu Shaoqi xuanji (shangjuan)* [The Selective of Liu Shaoqi (volume 1), 刘少奇选集 (上卷)]. Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, pp.384-385.

⁵ Foucault, Michel. 1977. *Discipline and Punishment: the birth of the prison*. New York, NY: Vintage.

The behavior which “does not measure up to the rule” and which “departs from it” would be corrected.⁶ The normalizing training, a process to single out the misconducts and then to criticize and punish those mistake makers, was a useful instrument of discipline. The standard for correct behaviors would be set through the normalizing training. Only when people under observation know that they would be punished, they would behave in correct ways. At this point, the term “disciplinary revolution” means that a revolutionary struggle against the mistakes would create a disciplined state.⁷

Through examining the processes of the rectification campaigns in three villages, this dissertation argues that the identification and correction of mistakes in land reform imposed a normalizing training to discipline the new state from the top to the bottom. The rectification campaigns functioned as the disciplinary revolution for the new state. Chinese communists therefore cherished their mistakes, as well as embracing their achievements.

⁶ Ibid, p. 178.

⁷ Gorski, Philip. 2003. *The disciplinary revolution: Calvinism and the Rise of the State in Early Modern Europe*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, p.xvi.

Chapter One

State and Discipline

There go the ships: there is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein.

----From *Psalm* 104:26

In the year of 1651, the ethnic minority Manchu was still struggling to consolidate their rule over China. After driving out some aristocrats from the court, the young emperor finally became the sovereign ruler of Chinese people. At that time, no one in China had any idea about a book written by an Englishman, Thomas Hobbes. That book was about the creation of the state.¹ The term “state” could refer to different kinds of government systems, including China’s imperial state. However, by using *Leviathan*—the great monster—to title his book, Hobbes described a new type of state with the great stature and overwhelming strength. Hobbes’ term “state” bears a number of specific characteristics associated with some profound changes in political and social systems at his time. With the rapid economic development at that time, the West Europeans witnessed fundamental political renovations in the government systems. Therefore, Hobbes’ metaphor is a prophecy of this new government system, which is usually termed as “modern state” to indicate its remarkable differences from the past government systems.²

¹ Hobbes, Thomas. 1996. *Leviathan*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, p.2.

² Hobbes uses the term “state,” instead of “modern state.” The term “modern” originates from the chronological attempt to describe the time period after the medieval in European history. The emergency

Three hundred and fifty years has passed since Hobbes made his prophecy. Today, just as what Hobbes predicted, the state has become a phenomenon. The modern state is like the horrendous biblical sea monster, not only as a social fact but also as a research subject. The studies on the modern state are regarded as crucial and even fundamental for social sciences.³

The imperial China also went through great transformation in the past 350 years. On the former Manchu's territory, Chinese communists have built up a government system distinct from the imperial state. This dissertation will focus on the journey of this specific modern state—the People's Republic of China. As a country at the top of the list in terms of both population and territory, China is strikingly big. Moreover, as a later-coming and non-western modern state under the rule of Chinese communists, China is distinct from its European counterparts, the early-established modern state, in the political and social systems. Through exploring the state-building process of Communist China,⁴ this research aims to advance the understanding of the modern state, not only on its nature but also on the social dynamics it implicates.

of the state, as Hobbes describes, was one of the major characteristic of this epoch. Accordingly, the term “modern state” was used to specify the features of the government system in the modern epoch. It is obvious that Hobbes' “state” is exactly the modern state. See Poggi, Gianfranco. 1978. *The development of the Modern State*. London: Hutchinson.

³ Held, David. 1989. *Political theory and the modern state: essays on state, power, and democracy*. Cambridge, MA: Polity.

⁴ The term “Communist China” does not mean that the communist political system was once established in China. Among Chinese specialists, “communist China” is used to indicate the dominance of Chinese communists politically and ideologically. See Schurmann, Franz. 1968, *Ideology and Organization in Communist China*, Berkeley, CA: The University of California Press. In particular, this term refers to a specific period: from the late 1940s to the late 1970s, during which the communist ideology was monopoly and widely recognized. As for the period after the 1980s reform, although communism has been questioned, the substantial political reform is yet up in the air. By using the term “Communist China,” this dissertation endeavors to signify the characteristics of social and government systems in China after the communists achieved power over China.

China was not one of the pioneering modern states historically. As a historical fact, the modern state system was first consolidated in Western Europe. Since the eighteenth century, with economic growth, the centralization of political power and the expansion of administration swept out the former loosely-governed monarchies in West Europe. These changes caught the attention of the founding fathers of social sciences, and were categorized as the emergence of the modern state by these scholars following Hobbes. The rise of the modern state is believed an important fact in understanding the new epoch:⁵ Furthermore, the efforts to explore the causes and consequences of these transformations provide the original impetus to social scientists.⁶ Generations of scholars have tried to treat the state as an ideal lens to study the modern era.

By the 1950s, all countries in the world had carried out some political renovations voluntarily or passively. Now the entire world has been parceled up into over two hundred recognized states, quite amount of which have never been organized as a political entity before. The commentators point out that these latterly emerging modern states, like China, have operated within social, structural, economic, cultural, and geopolitical circumstances different from those of the original modern states.⁷ Moreover,

⁵ According to Delanty and Isin, the shared concern on the formation and transformation of modernity among the founders of social sciences, especially sociology, could be exemplified on three major topics, among which the formation of the modern state is listed. The three topics are: 1) the transition from feudalism to capitalism; 2) the formation of the modern state; and 3) the revolutionary movements that heralded the modern age, such as the Reformation, the French Revolution, and so on. See Delanty, Gerard and Engin F. Isin. 2003. "Introduction: Reorienting Historical Sociology," in Gerard Delanty and Engin F. Isin (eds.), *Handbook of Historical Sociology*. Thousands Oak, CA: The Sage Publication, pp.1-8.

⁶ Skocpol, Theda. 1984, "Emerging Agendas and Recurrent Strategies," in Theda Skocpol (ed.). *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, pp. 356-391.

⁷ Tilly, Charles. 1984. *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

among the 200-some states in the world, the government institutions vary significantly.⁸

At this point, some questions come to mind and challenge the existing scholarships on the modern state which are associated with the specific history of the west Europe. Can China and other various latecomers be labeled as “modern states” like the pioneering Western European countries? Moreover, how could the experience of the non-western modern states, which are built up on the cultural ground distinctive from the western European countries, contribute to the discussions on “modern state”?

A brief review on the journeys of the late-coming non-western modern states toward their present government system is indispensable to answer the questions above. China could serve as a valuable example. Scholars agree that the late nineteenth century was the starting-point of China’s modern state-building project.⁹ At that time, China was facing the dangers of being colonized by the western invaders. Under this circumstance, Chinese intellectuals and revolutionists continuously called upon and devoted themselves the reformation of the old imperial system. These endeavors shared many common interests of the state-building process of the Western Europe, and are believed to be “on a course of state strengthening and modernization.”¹⁰

Similar experiences could be observed in other latecomers as well. The state-building projects in these countries were either carried out under the threats from the west or directly supervised by those early-established modern states.¹¹ Apparently, the great

⁸ Linz, Juan. 2000. *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

⁹ Kuhn, Philip. 2002. *Origins of the Modern Chinese State*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

¹⁰ Duara, Prasenjit. 1988. *Culture, Power, and the State: Rural North China, 1900—1942*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, p.2.

¹¹ Diamond carried out his study on the modern state with his discussion on the spread of democracy, which he believes is the ideal political regime for a modern state. In his historical examination on the

transformations starting from the Western Europe have greatly influenced the world as a whole. When the earliest modern states reached each corner of the earth, the whole world had been brought into the modern epoch. In this respect, the modern epoch is a global phenomenon, instead of a western one. Each state, including China and the western European countries, is characterized by this modern epoch, and should be regarded as a “modern state.” In fact, although China and other latecomers are not copies of the states in west Europe, every state in today’s world could match the ideal type of “modern state” more or less.¹² There is no reason to exclude the latecomers like China from the studies on the modern state.

Furthermore, when the non-western modern states are incorporated, it could be expected that their various journeys would challenge the classic research, which is mainly based on the state-building projects of the west. China, whose voyage differed from the common western path, offers some remarkable puzzles. Firstly, unlike the dispersive powers in European countries before the modern epoch, China enjoyed the centralized and powerful administration in its long history.¹³ Secondly, in contrast to the concentration of state power during the state-building in Western Europe, China experienced the destruction of the former centralized state following the fall of the

present states worldwide, Diamond notices that the changes in political culture of the traditional non-democratic societies were greatly influenced by the western democratic regimes. Not only had the advocates in these countries endeavored to follow the western path, but also some western states imposed great influences on their followers. See Chapter 2 in Diamond, Larry. 1999, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*. Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press. Moreover, by focusing on the influence of the western states, Diamond takes the stance that, with their characteristics situated in their distance from the West, the newly-established states have been converging to the European model.

¹² See Diamond, Larry. 1999, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*. Even for a failed state power, some modern features should be able to be identified. At least, the influences from the surrounding countries are impossible to ignore.

¹³ See Weber, Max. 1958b, “The Chinese Literati,” in H.H. Gerth and C.W. Mills (eds.). *From Max Weber*, New York: Oxford University Press, pp.416-444.

Chinese empire.¹⁴ Under these circumstances, several political groups could be identified through their distinct agendas in re-building a centralized state power. Finally, China's state-building project was eventually completed by the communists. Therefore, distinct from the prototype of the Western states, specific political and social features could be perceived in China's state-building project.¹⁵

Such distinctiveness raised questions in staging China in the modern-state scholarship:¹⁶ Did the state-building in China still refer to the original attempts of the modern state? Did China's state-building draw out the new dynamics detached from China's past to reorganize the society? These questions provide opportunities not only to make a close study of China's experience; but also to advance the theoretical inquiries of present scholarship on the modern state. On the one hand, in what sense the existing scholarship could be used to study the changes of China and other non-western modern states? On the other hand, how could the characteristics of China, as well as of other latecomers, contribute to further investigations on the modern state?

With these empirical and theoretical inquiries in mind, this dissertation will endeavor to probe into China's state-building process. In particular, the 1946-1952 Land Reform carried out by Chinese communists will be put into focus. This period was not

¹⁴ After the fall of the imperial state in 1911, warlords built up separatist kingdoms and continued to fight against each other. The national government was only nominal and was always disdained by the warlords. See the studies on the turbulent warlord period: Lary, Diana. 1974. *Region and Nation: The Kwangsi Clique in Chinese Politics, 1925-1937*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press. Young, Ernest. 1977. *The Presidency of Yuan Shih-k'ai: Liberalism and Dictatorship in Early Republican China*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

¹⁵ Linz, Juan. and Stepan Alfred. 1996. *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.

¹⁶ Zhang Jing [张静]. 2001. "Guojia zhengquan jianshe yu xiangcun zizhi danwei" [The establishment of state apparatus and the autonomous unit in countryside, 国家政权建设与乡村自治单位-问题与回顾], in *Kaifang shidai* [The opening time, 开放时代], no. 9.

only critical for Chinese communists to build up their power over China, but also a vital and final step in China's long journey toward the new political and social arrangements. Starting from historical scrutiny, this dissertation will shed light on the distinctiveness of China's experiences in building up a modern state. Moreover, this project will move from a case study to engage in classic and recent discussions on the modern state.

I. Sociological Theories on the Modern State

Studies on the modern state originally set off from the social transformations of Western Europe in the eighteenth century.¹⁷ Among these social changes, the centralization of political power caught great attention from the founding fathers of social science. The term "modern state" was put forward to emphasize the importance of these institutional innovations. The focus on new institutions has dominated the studies on the modern state since then. The establishment of efficient and rational institutions, such as bureaucracy and especially the taxation system, has been regarded as the primary achievements in the formation of a modern state.¹⁸

In addition to their preference on institutions, the cultural conversions with the rise of the modern state have caught eyes of generations of scholars since the beginning. It has been widely accepted that the new political arrangement is directly associated with specific ethics and spirits. Not only did the institutional transformations bring cultural

¹⁷ Skocpol, Theda. 1984, "Emerging Agendas and Recurrent Strategies." in Theda Skocpo (ed.). *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology*, pp. 356-391.

¹⁸ Tilly, Charles. 1975. *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

impacts, but the cultural impetus was essential for the birth of a modern state.¹⁹ The recent scholarship expands the definition of state from administrative and military organizations to pedagogical and ideological organizations, which then brings the cultural infrastructure of the state governance to light.²⁰

The different concerns mark the differences of two distinct approaches in studying the formation of modern state: the institutional perspective and the cultural perspective. The different agendas also lead to divergent understandings of the nature of the modern state in particular and the characteristics of the modern world in general. For that reason, the discussions on the modern state should start from the debates between “the institutional-oriented state” and “the culture-articulated state”.

1. The Institutional-Oriented State: the building-up of the state institutions

As we have seen, it is based on the institutional innovations in European history that the birth of the Leviathan was declared. Against the social and political changes, generations of scholars have explicitly related the formation of the modern state with the reformation of the government system. Therefore, the building-up of the state institutions and organizations is believed to be the essential part for the formation of a modern state.

The institutionalist emphasis on administrative rationalization and centralization could be traced back to Max Weber’s discussion on the state. In Weber’s influential definition, the modern state is “a political association with a rational, written constitution,

¹⁹ Steinmetz, George. 1999. “Introduction: Culture and the State,” in George Steinmetz (ed.). *State/Culture: State-Formation after the Cultural Turn*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, pp.1-49.

²⁰ Gorski, Philip. 2003. *The disciplinary revolution: Calvinism and the Rise of the State in Early Modern Europe*.

rationally ordained law, and an administration bound to rational rules or law, administered by trained officials.”²¹ Namely, it is a set of rational institutions—the application of rationality to state institutions—that defines the modern state. At this point, the rationalization of state institutions, such as the establishment of bureaucracy, has been recognized as the crucial context for the formation of modern state.²² As a more rational form of organization than other alternatives, the bureaucracy affirms the superiority of the modern state in its efficiency and capability of “application to all kinds of administrative tasks.”²³

Like the Weberians, another noteworthy group of social scientists—the Marxists—also stresses the institutional developments of the modern state. Of course, according to the Marxists, like other parts of the superstructure, the state should be explained primarily in terms of the interests and struggles of social classes.²⁴ However, attention is turned to the state as an ensemble of institutions, and the modern state is defined as a form of organization of class power and an instrument to achieve class interests. From this point of view, the Marxists specifically treat institutions of the modern state as technical instruments of government, which ensure “hegemony armoured

²¹ Weber, Max. 1958a. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. New York, NY: Scribner, pp.16-17.

²² According to Weber, bureaucracy, the specific administration bound to rational rules or law and administered by trained officials, is a pervasive feature of the modern state. Weber even foresees that this set of institutions is going to achieve overwhelming dominance in the modern epoch; “a polar night of icy darkness and hardness” lies ahead, while individuals are trapped in an “iron cage” of over bureaucratized control. See Weber, 1958a. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, p.158.

²³ Weber, Max. 1968. *Economy and Society* (Edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich). New York, NY: Bedminister Press, vol.1, p.223.

²⁴ Marx, Karl. 1978. “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,” in Robert C. Tucker (ed.). *The Marx-Engels Reader*. New York, NY: Norton, pp.436-525.

by coercion” of the modern state.²⁵

Although the Marxists agree that the state is embodied in a set of institutions and organizations, they can by no means be counted as institutionalists. In their view, the state institutions should be seen as the outcome of the struggles of class interests. At this point, the Marxists challenge the institutionalist belief that the institutional landscape is fundamental in studying the modern state.²⁶ By the 1960s, Marxism, along with other holistic approaches such as the structural-functionalism, had largely superseded the institutionalist research of the modern state. The concept of the state was replaced by other terms such as the political system, and even disappeared from the scholarship at that time.²⁷

Beginning from the late 1970s, a wide range of scholars fought against the ignorance of the state, and endeavored to bring the institutions back to explain political actions. As a response to the absence of institutional analysis, the new institutionalism re-defines the state “in terms of its political, administrative, and legal arrangements.”²⁸ Consequently, the importance of establishing the state infrastructure has been played up on the birth of the modern state.

Charles Tilly is a pioneer of the new institutionalism. By arguing “war makes states”, Tilly emphasized the institution-building effects of war.²⁹ According to him, the

²⁵ Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, p.263.

²⁶ Jessop, Bob. 2000. “Recent Developments in State Theory”, in Mark Cowling and Paul Reynolds (eds). *Marxism, the Millennium and Beyond*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.119-145.

²⁷ Schmidt, Vivien. 2006. “Institutionalism,” in Colin Hay, David Marsh, and Michael Lister (eds.) *The State: Theories and Issues*, New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.98-117.

²⁸ Schmidt, Vivien. 2006. “Institutionalism,” p.99.

²⁹ Tilly, Charles. 1985. “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime.” in Peter R. Evans, Dietrich Rueschmeyer, and Theda Skocpol (eds.). *Bring the State Back In*. New York, NY: Cambridge University

military pressure among the eighteenth-century western European countries caused eager revenue-gathering imperatives, which called upon the development of the fiscal and administrative apparatus. For this, Tilly reaffirms the Weberian fondness of the centralized bureaucracy, and the modern state is defined as “relatively centralized, differentiated organizations”.³⁰

Tilly’s stress on the institutional development has been echoed by later scholars of the new institutionalism. This group of scholars insists on the institutional reality of the state. Thus the state is first and foremost viewed as “a set of administrative, policing, and military organizations headed, and more or less well coordinated by, an executive authority.”³¹ In the view of the institutionalists, it is through highlighting administrative control as a significant feature of the state that the modern state acquires its autonomy.

While the importance of the institutions for a nascent state is emphasized, the coercive aspect of the state has been underscored. According to the institutionalists, the bureaucracy, as well as other organizations and institutions, first aims to “extract resources from society.”³² Hence, the state is viewed as a coercive power, which exercises its control over its territory and people living within it. At this point, many scholars disagree on the picture of the coercive state from the institutionalists. In contrast, the culturalists, another prominent group which value the cultural creations of the state,

Press, p.170.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Skocpol, Theda. 1979. *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.29.

³² Skocpol, Theda. 1994. *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, p.123.

believe that the modern state functions as a positive cultural impetus, instead of as a coercive force only.

2. The Culture-Articulated State: the creation of new culture

Among the extensive literature on the state, the studies on institutional renovation of the modern epoch are dominant without doubt, and the centralized administration has been believed to be the fundamental characteristics of the modern state. Despite that, the creation of new culture, accompanying the institutional development in the process of the modern state formation, also attracts academic attention in generations.

The studies on the cultural aspects of modern state could also be traced back to the founding fathers of the social sciences. In fact, when Weber focuses on the rationalization of bureaucracy in the new government system, he endorses rationality as a characteristic and distinctive ethos for the modern state. At this point, Weber's endorsement on rationality reveals that the cultural changes were essential parts in the formation of the modern state. Rationality, as a new set of standards of social conducts, was necessary for the birth of the modern state. Weber has already called upon attention on the cultural aspects of the modern state. Durkheim, another founding father of the social sciences, advances the cultural probe of the modern state as well. In the view of Durkheim, the state is "the organized center for the consciousness in society."³³ Durkheim believes that the state is above all a congregation of social thoughts and moral disciplines, instead of a set of bureaucratic organizations.

Targeting the institutionalist ignorance of the importance of cultural changes, the

³³ Durkheim, Emile. 1984. *The Division of Labor in Society*. New York, NY: Free Press, p.254.

cultural advocates move forward from the cultural emphasis of the founding fathers of social science.³⁴ Cultural transformations are seen as the foundations for the institutional renovations of the modern state.³⁵ As a result, the studies on “symbols, rituals, discourse, and cultural practices rather than social structure or social class” flourish.³⁶ As some culturalists demonstrate, the state authority needs to be reaffirmed by continuous ceremonies and rituals. Furthermore, some believe that cultural practices are not devices to shore up the state; instead, they are “what the state is for.”³⁷ At this point, the cultural practices of the state are believed to mark the state as a political entity. Hence, the modern state only could be understood through the examination of cultural and symbolic actions.

According to the culturalists, it is impossible to talk about the formation of the modern states without discussing cultural changes. In fact, they argue that certain cultural changes serve to foster people’s notion of the state. In this respect, the discussions on national identity were brought into the scholarship. Some scholars argue that the modern state could become an effective entity, only when members of the state

³⁴ Some institutionalists admit that ideology is undoubtedly a necessary ingredient for the modern state. Skocpol even argues that one important reason that states matter is their effects on political culture. However, according to them, the cultural factors were always greatly limited by existing structural conditions. Therefore, culture is primarily an effect of states. It is the outcome rather than the precondition of the state. See Skocpol, Theda. 1985. “Bring the State Back in: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research.” in Peter R. Evans, Dietrich Ruesdchemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (eds.) *Bring the State Back In*, pp. 3-37.

³⁵ See Steinmetz, George. 1999. “Introduction: Culture and the State.”

³⁶ Bonnell, Victoria and Hunt, Lynn. 1999. “Introduction.” in Victoria. E. Bonnell and Lynn. Hunt (eds.). *Beyond the Culture Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, p.8.

³⁷ Geertz, Clifford. 1980. *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-century Bali*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, p.13.

could identify anonymous others as part of the imagined community—the nation.³⁸ To be exact, the formation of the modern state relies on the construction of national consciousness, the successful creation of a cultural community. This study initiates the concerns of the “nation”—the cultural dimension of the modern state. A key aspect of this argument is to separate “national” from “state”, namely to distinguish the cultural constructions from institutional renovations.³⁹ The rise of new culture is not just an indispensable part of the formation of the modern state, but the foundation for the new political system. Therefore, first of all, the modern state should be viewed as a cultural production.⁴⁰

The efforts of exploring the cultural formation of the modern state are finally systematized in the studies of “nation-building.” In order to explore the cultural aspects of the modern state, the culturalists propose to examine the creation of the national political community; specifically how people are connected to the state and get confidence in their rulers and their institutions.⁴¹ The term “nation-building” is to

³⁸ Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of nationalism*. New York, NY: Verso.

³⁹ Young, Michael. 2002. “Confessional Protest: The Religious Birth of U.S. National Social Movements in the 1830s.” *American Sociological Review*, no. 67, pp.660-688.

⁴⁰ The “nation-state” has become a popular research subject in studying the modern state. In fact, the term “nation-state” derives from Benedict Anderson’s study. See Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of nationalism*. This dissertation argues that the nation-state, in fact, is a synonym of the modern state. As shown, the “modern” in the term of the modern state is used to specify the chronological order of the institutional renovations in the eighteenth-century Western Europe. While Anderson uses the term “nation” to denote the cultural aspects of the modern state, the term “nation-state” clearly demonstrates that the modern state is not only a political entity, but also a cultural entity. See Giddens, Anthony, 1985. *The Nation-state and Violence*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press. The differences between the terms “modern state” and “nation-state” are due to different emphasis on the same facts. This dissertation will discuss both the institutional and cultural aspects of the modern state. As a result, the term “nation-state” will not be specifically used in this dissertation.

⁴¹ Bendix, Reinhard. 1996. *Nation-Building and Citizenship: Studies of Our Changing Social Order*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

describe the process of cultural construction of the modern state. Since then, two processes have been distinguished from each other during the formation of the modern state: state-building and nation-building. State-building deals with the organizational constructions and the establishment of state apparatus, while nation-building focus on the creation of the national political community, the formation of the national identity.

3. Between State-building and Nation-building

The distinction between the state-building and the nation-building sheds light on not only two processes in building up a modern state, but also two integrate parts of a modern state. On the one hand, an effective state requires a set of the fiscal and administrative apparatus, from the capital to the peripheral. As the institutionalists argue, rational bureaucracy and correlative institutions make up the state machine, and furnish the machine with means to carry out policies over its territories. On the other hand, the commitment of and the support from the people within the territories ensure that the state machine works properly. If the bureaucracy could be regarded as the body of the state, the cultural commitment could be viewed as the soul. The culturalists would argue that it is the soul that manages each muscle and bone of the body to work together in harmony and to complete a movement.⁴²

From this point of view, the distinction between state-building and nation-building could satisfy both the institutionalists and culturalists. The state-building

⁴² See Gorski, 2003. *The disciplinary revolution: Calvinism and the Rise of the State in Early Modern Europe*. The metaphor of “body” and “soul” is used by Hobbes in *Leviathan*. Gorski (2003) examines the images on the frontispiece of the 1965 edition of *Leviathan*, and points out that the image of the king symbolizes two dimensions of state power—temporal and spiritual. Here, Hobbes is very clear that the king’s soul—spiritual authority—is as important as his body—the soldiers, arms, castles and so on.

perspective follows the institutionalist appeal, which values the institutional renovations of the modern state. Likewise, the culturalists would appreciate the nation-building perspective, which regards the cultural constructions as the characteristics of the modern state. Therefore, the state-building and nation-building perspectives together incorporate the two dimensions of the modern state, and could bring out a comprehensive understanding on the state.

However, while both the institutionalist and culturalists could somehow find satisfactions from the distinction between the state-building and nation-building, both groups also question this separation. On the one hand, scholars notice that, during the formation of a modern state, it is not easy to distinguish the state-building process and the nation-building process.⁴³ Although either institutional renovations or cultural constructions might dominate a certain period, it is hard to imagine that these two processes are completely separated from each other. Neither the establishment of government institutions nor the cultural constructions is the outcome of the other. Instead, the two processes are always intertwined with each other. As a result, the separation between state-making and nation-making would overlook the interactions between institutional renovations and cultural articulations, which might distort the understandings on the specific features of the modern state.

The state-building and nation-building perspectives are most likely to be carried out under a “top-down” assumption. While the importance of the state leaders is

⁴³ In his study on the history of European states, Tilly believes that, in general, state-building preceded nation-building in Europe. However, at the same time, Tilly admits that in some countries these two processes happened simultaneously. See Tilly, Charles. 1975. “Reflections on the History of European State-Making,” in Charles Tilly (ed.), *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

highlighted, the ordinary people are ignored. This elitist tendency is clearly exemplified in the famous aphorism from the Marchese Massimo D'Azeglio after the political unification of Italy was accomplished: “we have made Italy and now we have to make Italian.”⁴⁴ The modern state, both the body—state apparatus, and the soul—cultural commitments, is made by “we”—the state leaders and the elites. It is believed that the state leaders enact the policies to build the modern state and the elites share the ideas of the modern state with the leaders, and the majorities living in the modern state are just passive targets of the state. As a result, the interactions among different social groups are missing in studying the formation of the state.⁴⁵

However, when the culturalists endeavor to explore the cultural basis of the modern state, the elitist tendency in studying the state has already been under challenge.⁴⁶ According to the culturalists, the modern state would be a mission impossible without the devotions of individuals. Although some culturalists regarded the ordinary people only as consumers of national culture, they could not deny that the loyalties from ordinary people are crucial components of the modern state.⁴⁷ At this point, the focuses on cultural dimension of the state have already opened a door to bring ordinary people, as

⁴⁴ Cited from Almond, Gabriel and Bingham Powell. 1966. *Comparative Politics: A Development Approach*. Boston, MA: Little Brown, p.35.

⁴⁵ In her study on the nation-building of Britain, Colley criticizes the classic top-down approach. She says, “active commitment to Great Britain was not, could not be a given. It had to be learnt, and men and women needed to see some advantage in learning it.” See Colley, Linda. 1992. *Britons: Forging the nation 1707-1837*. New Haven, CT: The Yale University Press, p.295.

⁴⁶ See Steinmetz, George. 1999. “Introduction: Culture and the State.”

⁴⁷ In his landmark studies on the effects of maps, newspapers, and book markets on national identities, Benedict Anderson portrays the ordinary people mainly as the consumers of these cultural products. However, in contrast to the institutionalists who only talk about the establishment of the government system, Anderson stages the ordinary people stage into his studies of the state. See Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of nationalism*.

well as the elites, within the given territory, into the studies of the modern state.

The classic studies on state-building and nation-building not only exclude the ordinary people but also ignore the interactions between the institutional renovations and cultural transformations. Therefore, the separation between state-building and nation-building requires to be reconsidered. The new agenda, which should integrate both the institutional and the cultural aspects of the state, both the state leaders and the ordinary citizens, would bring some new insights into the discussions on the modern state.

II. New Research Agenda: To discipline the modern state

The focus on “top-down” macro-political strategies of the state theorists is also a target of Foucault’s research. Foucault argues that the “top-down” state theorists only pay attention to the domination of the state and put a sovereign political and legal state power at the center.⁴⁸ These essentialists in fact adopt the medieval notions of the state, which also underlines the centralized, monarchical sovereignty and a unified, juridical-political power. The establishment of the great territorial administrative state is just one part of the modern state, but not the essential characteristics of it. Foucault argues that multiplicity of institutions and practices have been involved in the exercise of state power in the modern era. Therefore, the modern state and its functions are the contingent outcomes of specific practices, instead of the development and expansion of the inherent, pre-given properties of state apparatus.

Foucault’s criticism of the “top-down” approach questions the institutionalist

⁴⁸ Foucault, Michel. 1991. “Governmentality,” in Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (eds.), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, pp. 87-104.

views of the modern state. He even says that the head of the king has not been chopped off.⁴⁹ Thus, the state should not be studied in term of the state apparatus, a “body” with its elements, its resources and its forces. Instead, the rise of the state is related to the rise of a new “micro-physics of power”, the power that “reaches into the very grain of individuals”.⁵⁰

Against this background, Foucault introduces the concept of “discipline” into his studies Discipline is the key of micro-physics of power at the modern era.⁵¹ As a set of specific techniques and strategies, discipline ensures the modern power to reach every individual within its domain. Different from the coercive control, disciplinary power directly aims at controlling the movement, gesture, and speed of the body. As a result, the disciplinary power interrupts, trains, and surveils the individuals, and then drives them toward normalization. On the one hand, discipline is the “conduct of conduct”, which assumes responsible for all aspects of the individual—“his physical training, his aptitude to work, his everyday conduct, his moral attitude, his state of mind,”⁵² On the other hand, discipline is an art of correct training. The chief function of the disciplinary power is to “train” the individual in correct ways. “The normalization imposes homogeneity”: while the norm is introduced, individual differences are overshadowed.⁵³

In short, disciplinary power is an essential characteristic of the modern epoch, which

⁴⁹ Foucault, Michel. 1980b. “Truth and Power,” in Gordon Colin (ed.). *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books, p.121.

⁵⁰ Foucault, Michel. 1980a. “Prison Talk,” in Gordon Colin (ed.). *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, p. 39.

⁵¹ Foucault, Michel. 1977. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*.

⁵² Ibid, p.235.

⁵³ Ibid, p.184.

targets the individual and aims to achieve normalization.

In Foucault's view, the modern state grew out from the strategies and mechanisms of discipline. It is the introduction and diffusion of the disciplinary techniques and strategies that brings "souls" to the government system of the modern state. Therefore, the rise of discipline is directly and closely related to the formation of the modern state. First and foremost, the disciplinary power creates docile and obedient subjects for the modern state. Targeting behaviors of every individual, discipline shapes the individuals and the "composing forces in order to obtain an efficient machine."⁵⁴ The disciplined individuals include both the state princes and the ordinary people within the state. As a result, the disciplinary power produces not only qualified labors for the administration but also individuals committed to the modern state. Therefore, discipline not only improves administrative efficiency, but also establishes a more orderly society which is easy to govern by the modern state. Through achieving "government of one's self and others'," discipline distinguishes the modern state from its ancient counterparts.

By focusing on the disciplinary power, Foucault brings out a new agenda to study the modern state. While the individual is regarded as the object of discipline, state princes and local people become equal. Now the state is not the product of the leaders and the elites, but an aggregation of individuals. At this point, social actors at different levels are brought into the study on the state, and the top-down tendency in the classic studies on the state has been overcome. Not only the central government but also local efforts could be integrated into the studies of the modern states.

Moreover, the separation between the institutional and cultural preferences has

⁵⁴ Ibid, p.164.

also been dismissed. The individual under the disciplinary power could be either the agent or the object of the bureaucratic government, as well as the producer and consumer of the national culture. Both the institutional innovation and cultural changes are rested on the endeavors to discipline the individuals. While rooting the state in every individual, disciplinary power brings cultural and political boundaries into close alignment. At this point, the state is treated as an integrated unity.

Finally, the accentuation on the functions of discipline also overturns the orthodox picture of the modern state, which stresses the repressive and coercive aspect of the state power. When discipline, which aims to bring up new subjectivities, has been highlighted, the state power could then be treated as a productive practice and as a positive pedagogic power.⁵⁵

Discipline in fact is a classic topic in sociology. Weber already talks about “discipline” in his study of rationality. Weber argues that discipline originating from the monasteries is important to understand the rationalization of the modern epoch and the establishment of bureaucracy.⁵⁶ On the one hand, the ascetic churches and sects possessed a system of congregational discipline. On the other hand, the innerworldly asceticism is not only theological doctrine, but connected with ecclesiastical discipline.

Weber’s interests on the discipline in religions are shared by Gorski.⁵⁷ Through

⁵⁵ Foucault stresses the pastoral character of the state. Like the shepherd who keeps watch on the believers, leading them, directing them, and ensuring their salvation, the modern state combines the governance of bodies and souls, and develops the reason of the state. See Foucault, Michel. 1991. “Governmentality.”

⁵⁶ In his discussion on religious discipline, Weber specifically argues that the Calvinists were not content with a disciplined church. They also wanted a disciplined society. However, Weber’s theory on discipline is mainly about military discipline, and the main stress of his discipline is that an order should be obeyed. See Weber, 1958c, “The Meaning of Discipline.” in *From Max Weber*, pp. 253-264. Also see Weber, 1968. *Economy and Society*. Vol. 2, pp.1148-1160.

⁵⁷ See Gorski, 2003. *The disciplinary revolution: Calvinism and the Rise of the State in Early Modern*

exploring the interrelations between the Reformation and the formation of the modern state, Gorski in fact builds up a bridge, which connects Weber's interests on the discipline in religions with Foucault's emphasis on the importance of discipline in the modern state. Gorski points out that the Protestant Reformation as the disciplinary revolution was an important impetus for the formation of the modern state. The Reformation encourages the introduction and diffusion of the disciplinary techniques and strategies. This disciplinary revolution finally "led to a general expansion of state infrastructure and a progressive rationalization of social-political ethics and thus to a secular increase in state capacity."⁵⁸

However, Gorski is not a religionist. He specified that the disciplinary revolution in fact is a set of political and social revolutions, which initiates transformations in government system and social orders through disciplining the individuals. As a matter of fact, like the Reformation, other social and political revolutions also stimulate an intense and rapid process of discipline, and should be regarded as the disciplinary revolution. Gorski believes that in a broad sense, the French and Russian revolutions are disciplinary revolutions as well.⁵⁹ Through rapid, basic transformations in social and political arenas, the revolutions cultivate new strategies and techniques of disciplines to regulate and normalize the individuals and then social organizations. Such disciplinary efforts prepare obedient individuals for both efficient bureaucracy and new social orders. Therefore, the disciplinary revolution is the indispensable preparation for the modern state.

Europe.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p.38.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p.34.

Four types of discipline have been identified as the functioning strategies of the disciplinary revolution in building up the modern state. Gorski demonstrates two different levels and modes of discipline—the individual and social levels and the normative vs. coercive modes. The individual level emphasizes the internalization of discipline within the individual subject, while the social level focuses on the changes on rules and regulations in the communities. Moreover, discipline could be imposed as the coercion to correct, and also as a normative power to foster autonomous new subjects. The table 1 below shows the directions that discipline can operate. Gorski points out four types of discipline which facilitate the formation of the modern state: self-discipline, corrective discipline, communal discipline, and judicial or institutional discipline.

Table 1: Four types of discipline

	Normative	Coercive
Individual	Self-discipline	corrective discipline
Social	communal discipline	institutional discipline

In the process of building up the modern state, these four types of discipline must work together and even influence and interlock with each other. Some type may be found predominant within a particular site at a certain time, but all four together could bring out the comprehensive disciplinary revolution, which will discipline the social actors at different levels for the build-up of the modern state. Moreover, while creating the state, these disciplinary practices are autonomous of the state as well. The four types of

discipline may vary in the extent to which the state under construction as an active agent manipulates them. Therefore, how the state creates discipline and how discipline creates the state were all essential to understand in the formation of the modern state.

The new research agenda highlights the operation and function of discipline in the modern state. Now the actual practices of the state have been put emphasis on, and this new agenda provides new opportunities in studying the modern state. The state is not studied in terms of a bunch of static organizations or the resultant identities. The state is studied primarily in term of the practices in action. As a result, social actors at different levels are all integrated into the practices, and the state could be seen both bottom-up and top-down. Starting from the new agenda, this dissertation will carry out a detailed study on the trajectory of a disciplinary revolution in a specific country, China. Through examining the relationship between discipline and the state, this study proposes to bring out new insights into the discussions of the modern state.

III. Research Domain: the rectification campaigns in Communist China

The late-coming China journeyed toward the modern state through a peculiar passage, which is sharply different from the common courses of the pioneering western states. Different from the dispersive powers in European countries before the modern epoch, China enjoyed the centralized and powerful administration in its long history. It was under the threat of the western invaders when China launched political and social reforms since the late imperial time. In addition to the classic institutionalist studies, the establishment of state apparatus, such as the enforcement of the taxation system, has been

stressed.⁶⁰ On the other hand, the formation of Chinese national identity against foreign invasions has also been acknowledged.⁶¹ The turbulence in China from the late-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century has been set into a passage toward the modern state. The institutional renovations and relative cultural articulations were vital concerns in the discussions.

Different groups strove to build up the modern state throughout the late Imperial time and the following Republic period. At last, Chinese communists completed the task to build up a modern state. After a long-time destruction, the whole country was reunited by the communists, and the state successfully penetrated into local communities over the broad territory. The achievements of the communists are regarded as the final step of China's long journey of political and social modernization.⁶² Later on, the studies on local practices of state power bring out a new perspective to understand the great transformation in China.⁶³ At this point, the re-examination of China's transformation from the late Imperial to the communist success has been proposed. Which kind of

⁶⁰ See the discussion on the establishment of the bureaus taking charge of the collection of levies in Duara, Prasenjit. 1988. *Culture, Power, and the State: Rural North China, 1900-1942*.

⁶¹ See Johnson, Chalmers. 1962. *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power: The Emergence of Revolutionary China 1937-1945*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. Before the formation of the national identity, there existed the imperial identity—the identification as Chinese—to some extent. However, the identification with anonymous others as part of the imagined community was absent.

⁶² See Schurmann, Franz. 1968. *Ideology and Organization in Communist China*. On the other hand, the communist characteristic of China's state-formation also draws attention from scholars. The coercive aspect of the modern state has been exemplified in the studies of the communist states. According to Linz and Stephan, the communist-party state, what they labels as totalitarianism, is based on the coercion of the state over the society. Arendt even portrays the one-party state as an omnipotent power which squeezes out any possible free space for the society. See Linz and Stepan. 1996. *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*. Arendt, Hannah. 1973. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

⁶³ See Chan, Anita. Richard Madsen, and Unger, J. 1984. *Chen Village: the Recent History of a Peasant Community in Mao's China*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Friedman, Edward, Paul G. Pickowicz, and Mark Selden. 1991. *Chinese Village, Socialist State*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

political and social changes China had experienced? To what extent did these changes initiate fundamental transformations in China and bring China into the modern epoch?

Against this background, this dissertation proposes to study the disciplinary practices in the communist revolution, as a disciplinary revolution. Through re-examining the detailed process of the communist disciplinary revolution, this project will explore how the individuals at different levels were disciplined, and how the modern state was established in China through such disciplinary efforts. The focus on China's disciplinary revolution could offer glimpses into the production of new subjectivities as well as new institutions. A set of deliberate and systematic normalizing endeavors will be shed on light. At this point, the study of the strategies and techniques of discipline would bring out an innovative and comprehensive understanding of the social and political systems that Chinese communists brought out. This project will focus on a particular period, the 1946-1952 land reform.

The 1946-1952 land reform initiated by the communists brought fundamental changes in villages throughout rural China. Millions of peasants got their own plot for the first time in generations. However, this land reform was not merely an economic reform. The land redistribution projects brought profound social and political changes in rural areas. The earlier land possessions were used as a measure to divide the villagers into different classes, such as landlords and poor peasants. The activists in the reform were recruited into the communist party and chosen as village leaders. The party branches were established in villages; so did the peasant leagues, women associations and other organizations. Through carrying out the land redistribution, Chinese communists built up their power at grassroots.

Therefore, the 1946-1952 land reform was neither merely for land nor simply about land. Instead, the land projects served Chinese communists' aims in building up the state power reaching every inch of the broad territories. Therefore, the 1946-1952 land reform was in fact a crucial step for Chinese communists to build up the state power over China. The 1946-1952 land reform first helped the communist to gain victories over their rivals in battle fields. Once the communists taking over the whole country, the land reform facilitated the building the new state through establishing village administrations. Seen from the perspective of these empirical achievements, the 1946-1952 land reform seemed to be a big success.

Nevertheless, if we scrutinize the process of land reform step by step, it turned out that fighting against mistakes was a constant and everlasting topic. During land reform, great efforts were made to identify and correct wrongdoings and mistakes in previous work. Instead of embracing their achievements, Chinese communists seemed cherished their mistakes even more. Three successive regulations directing the 1946-1952 land redistribution could divide the reform into three phases. One after another, these three regulations marked some essential changes of basic policies. As a matter of fact, all these shifts were claimed as efforts to correct mistakes occurring in previous campaigns. The identification and rectification of preceding mistakes were regarded as the basis of further advancements. Ironically, even the rectification campaigns themselves would become targets of later correcting endeavors.

The rectification campaigns, which strove to dismiss mistakes, were indispensable in the process of Chinese communists' building up their power over rural areas. Instead of stepping from one success to another, it looks like that the communists build up a state

from mistakes to mistakes. Through the 1946-1952 land reform, a new state power was established on the basis of identifying and correcting mistakes.

To build up a new state power over broad territories must require a great deal of efforts in establishing new systems, both organizational and cultural. However, during such a building-up process, Chinese communists seemed to have some negative and skeptical attitudes toward their own accomplishments. The 1946-1952 land reform in China witnessed constant endeavors in identifying and correcting mistakes within the new establishments. The new systems were somehow under attack, and some new establishments were disapproved and even pulled down by the exact group which set them up in the first place. The rectification campaigns in the 1946-1952 land reform then poses a puzzle in understanding the state-building process of China. Through identifying and correcting mistakes in preceding stages, the rectification campaigns not only put the newly-established institutions under fire, but also smashed up people's beliefs and commitments toward the institutions.

The mistakes and rectifications in the communist efforts to build up a new state have drawn attention from scholars. Some scholars argue that the communist policies mainly originated from the communist ideology, instead of the close observation of Chinese reality.⁶⁴ As a result, the unrealistic policies caused the disastrous results in land reform. While this group of scholars emphasized the mistakes in policy-making, other scholars pay more attention on the implementation of the policies at grassroots. The mistakes and the following corrections are regarded as the communist efforts to adjust

⁶⁴ Huang, Philip. 1995. "Rural Class Struggle in the Chinese Revolution: Representational and Objective Realities from the Land Reform to the Cultural Revolution," in *Modern China*, vol.21, no.1, pp. 105-143.

themselves into the exact local contexts.⁶⁵ Therefore, the continuous rectification campaigns are regarded as an evidence of the flexibility of Chinese communists.

Starting from the mistakes during the 1946-1952 land reform, this dissertation aims to explore the role of rectification campaigns in the communists' state-building project. Two sets of questions will be examined: Firstly, it will study the dynamics of the continuous rectifications. Why was a building process centered at struggles against its own mistakes? Who were the social actors involved in the rectifications? What were the motivations of these social actors in identifying and correcting the mistakes? Which kind of roles could the efforts in identifying and correcting mistakes play in building up a nascent state power? Secondly, focusing on the continuous rectifications, this dissertation will explore the characteristics of the nascent state. What could such rectification efforts tell about the characteristics of the new state? Was the land reform troubled by mistakes a failed project? Or could such perversity and self-denial reveal some secrets in building up a state? What could the efforts of identifying and correcting mistakes in Chinese state-building tell about modern state? By aid of the term "discipline," this dissertation will explore how identifying and correcting mistakes work as normalizing attempts. Discipline as a technique of normalization will be used as the framework to explore the rectification campaigns and the establishment of China's communist state. Different types of discipline, both normative and coercive, will be discussed at both the individual level and the social level. Furthermore, starting from the correcting trainings of the rectification campaigns, this dissertation will show how the

⁶⁵ See Pepper, Suzanne. 1978. *Civil War in China: The Political Struggle, 1945-1949*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Shue, Vivienne. 1980. *Peasant China in Transition: The Dynamics of Development toward Socialism, 1949-1956*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

rectifications functioned as the disciplinary revolution for the building-up of Chinese communist state.

Through identifying and correcting mistakes, the rectification campaigns promoted a set of new disciplines and achieved the normalization of the individuals at different social positions.⁶⁶ The techniques and strategies of discipline would help to analyze how the state is built up from the individual level to the institutional and cultural level. The studies on the rectification campaigns would reveal the specific ways of educating and disciplining individuals for the sake of the state. Therefore, the self-denials of the communists in the rectification campaigns did not undermine the basis of the authority of modern state. Instead, the rectification campaigns served as a disciplinary revolution which fostered the “conduct of conduct” for the new state. The identification of their own mistakes did not smashed Chinese communists, but defined the state built up by the communists. At this point, the techniques of discipline could open a window on the establishment of Chinese communist state.

IV. Fieldworks and Chapter Plan

This dissertation will examine a specific period in China’s journey toward the modern state—the land reform. From 1946 to 1952, Chinese communist launched a project to reconstruct political arrangements and the social order in rural China through the re-distribution of the land and property. The land reform was carried out with the

⁶⁶ In his study of the first Puritan settlers of Massachusetts, Kai Erikson shows how the Puritans community was established through punishing the deviant behaviors. Erikson himself admits that he is inspired by Durkheim’s argument in *The Division of Labor*: the deviant act creates a sense of mutuality among the people of a community by supplying a focus for group feeling. Erikson, Kai. 2004. *Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

gradual takeover of Chinese communists over the broad territory. The 1946 May-fourth Directives, the 1948 Basic Law, and the 1952 Agrarian Law, these three regulations marked three steps of the land reform. The land reform was first initiated in the communist base areas; next, on their way to achieve the military success, Chinese communists carried out the redistribution project in the later-liberated areas; finally, after the complete takeover, the land reform was consolidated in the newly-liberated areas. Therefore, three types of localities are included in this study. On the one hand, each of these three localities would represent different strategies of the land reform. On the other hand, these three regional practices together recorded the journey of the communists to carry out their project from the beginning to the end. At this point, the examination on the experiences of these three localities would make up a rather complete overview of Chinese land reform as a whole.

The empirical data of this study will be mainly drawn from both archives and interviews.⁶⁷ The party documents will demonstrate Chinese communist policies during land reform. Local archives, which include local interpretations of the central committee's directives and the reports of local land reform practices, will be used to explore the interaction between the local leaders and higher authorities, as well as to reproduce local stories of the land reform.

Oral history testimonies from interviews with the villagers will be the main sources to access both the grassroots individuals and the exact land reform processes at

⁶⁷ The archive collection from the three research sites in this project is not balanced. For all of them, the majority of the archives used in this project are from county archives. Prefecture archives and district archives are used only when they are accessible in the research sites. A great number of interviews used in this project were conducted by the members of the Research Center for Oral History of Social Life at Peking University in 1996-2001. The 2004 Xigou interviews were conducted with the collation of Professor Guo Yuhua at Tsinghua University, and the rest were conducted by Jiangsui He.

the village level. In the villages under investigation, people over seventy years old, who were adults during the Land Reform, have been interviewed. As the participants of the Land Reform, these people could provide accounts to recover the process of the Land Reform in villages. Moreover, the oral history testimonies also enable the examinations of the experiences of the witness studied. Then the transformations at the individual level could be integrated. As a result, local practices and the local people are major concerns of this project.

The data from three villages will be included. Xigou (the western gulch), Beiwan (the northern bay), and Nancun (the southern village), each will represent one of the three stages of the communist land reform.⁶⁸ Xigou is a village located in the hilly western plateau of China. It had been a base-area of Chinese communists for a long time. Various social and political reforms had been proclaimed before the land reform. Since the summer of 1946, land reform was carried out in Xigou under the May-Fourth Directive. The fieldwork in Xigou began from 1997 and over 200-hour interviews have been conducted.

As a village taken over by the communists on their way to achieve national power, land reform Beiwan was launched in 1948, after the communists had already kicked off the rectification campaigns targeting the newly-released Basic Agrarian Law. Located in the fertile north plain, Beiwan was a Japanese colony before the communist takeover. About 150-hour interviews have been completed in Beiwan since the fieldwork started in

⁶⁸ Pseudo-names are used for these three research sites. Only the names above the provincial level are not changed. The prefectures, counties, districts, and villages are all referred by using pseudo-names. In this dissertation, quotation marks are used to indicate the name-changes in the titles of publications and archives which originally use the real names of these places.

1998.

The Communists took over Nancun from the Nationalist government. This southern village was not brought into the land reform schema until the 1950 Agrarian Reform Law was released. One hundred hour oral history testimonies have been collected in the fieldwork since 2003.

Based on these empirical data from these three villages, this dissertation will examine the disciplinary practice of the modern state. The theoretical vision will be kept in sight when scrutinizing the process for Chinese communists to build up the state power, especially the 1946-1952 land reform. The empirical question in this dissertation will focus on the rectification campaigns in the land reform. Why did the rectification campaigns become a routine procedure of the land reform? How did the identification and correction of mistakes define China's journey toward a modern state? The strategies and techniques of disciplines will be used as the key to solve the puzzles.

This introductory chapter reviews the scholarship on the modern state. The classic studies emphasize both the build of state apparatus and the commitment from the citizens. The recent scholarship uses the term "discipline" to understand such commitment. Five other chapters will be included in this dissertation.

Chapter 2 To Build a Modern State in China will begin with a discussion of the village life under the control of the imperial state. The chapter will continue to summarize the efforts of the late-Qing Empire, the Nationalists, the Japanese, and the Communists in the journey to build up a modern state at the grassroots.

Chapter 3 Land Reform and Mistakes will focus on the land reform in the Communist base area in 1946-1948. Through the examination of the land reform projects

and the following rectification campaigns in Xigou, the initial attempts of Chinese Communists in building up the state power will be elaborated. Moreover, the specific interests of Chinese communists in identifying and correcting mistakes will also be discussed.

Chapter 4 Rectifications and the Disciplinary Revolution provides the accounts on the continuous rectification efforts in 1948-1950. The normalizing efforts will be elaborated as a disciplinary revolution launched the communists. Beiwan, a village taken over by the Communists on their way to national power, will be under the focus.

Chapter 5 To Discipline the “New-man” will mainly study from the hierarchical rectifications in 1950-1952. Based on the experience of a newly-liberated village, Nancun, the effects of the rectifications on the individuals at different levels will be brought into the discussion.

Chapter 6 A State from Mistakes argues that the authority of the communists was built up from the “mistakes.” This chapter will mainly discuss the routinized efforts in identifying and correcting mistakes which characterize Chinese politics in later periods.

Chapter Two

To Build a Modern State in China

Dreaming won't get you to Damascus, but discipline will.

----From *Lawrence of Arabia*

To build a strong state must have been a dream for many people, but this dream is not an easy one to be realized. In this long and formidable journey, only those who look upon discipline as a necessity would have a chance to achieve the glories of building a strong state. Therefore, a disciplinary revolution that could lay out the foundation of this new state through creating a more disciplined polity is fundamental in the process to build up a state.

In its long history, the Chinese imperial state enjoyed a centralized bureaucracy.¹ Moreover, mainly by the aid of Confucianism, the imperial state established ideological controls over the grassroots.² Disciplining each individual in local communities was a direct concern and also an insistent desire of the imperial state. However, some specific features separated the disciplinary practices of Chinese imperial state from such

¹ In his discussion on the development of bureaucracy in the West, Weber already noticed that Chinese literati governed and administrated the big empire through a bureaucratic ruling. See Weber, Max. 1958d, "The Chinese Literati," in *From Max Weber*, pp.416-444.

² In his monograph on Chinese political thoughts, Kung-chuan Hsiao then points out that the bureaucratic system in China had been endorsed by different generations and schools of Chinese scholars. Among these social thoughts, Confucianism was promoted by the imperial state and was carried out as the orthodoxy through the Confucian education in a systematic way. See Hsiao, Kung-chuan [萧公权]. 1961. *Zhongguo zhengzhi sixiang shi* [History of Political Thoughts in China, 中国政治思想史]. Vol. 1-6. Taipei: Zhonghua wenhua chuban shiye weiyuanhui.

endeavors of a modern state. In imperial China, the bureaucratic administration was not directly involved into the disciplinary practices at the grassroots.³ As a result, the imperial control over local communities was never through and complete as the pioneer modern state in the Western Europe. When China was attacked by those early-established modern states, the once successful imperial government could not even defend itself. While the old political and social systems were on the verge of collapse, groups of Chinese set out their journey to build up the modern state.

And so, in sum the economic and military invasion of the West triggered a great political and social crisis in China, which forced the Chinese to seek for building up a strong modern state. Since then, several political powers engaged in building up the modern state system over the broad territory of China. The Qing dynasty was the forerunner in this journey. In order to sustain its governance, the Qing monarchy government kicked off a series of reforms. Although the policies did not save the empire from its doom, the efforts drew the curtain of the disciplinary revolution for a modern China. After the demise of Chinese empire, this attempt was carried out by competing groups, including the Nationalists, the Japanese, and the Communists.⁴ All these three

³ Hsiao Kung-chuan, 1960. *Rural China: Imperial Control in the Nineteenth Century*. Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press.

⁴ Although the Republic of China had declared itself even before the abdication of the last Qing emperor, the first seventeen years of the Republic were characterized by destruction and chaos. China was divided into separate regimes controlled by different forces of arms. The warlords fought against each other, and strove to defend and expand their small realms. The political entity of China was nominal but not substantial at that time. However, in the late 1920s, the provincial warlords were restrained, and the nationalists and communists gradually stabilized their respective controls over certain areas. With Japanese invaders posing to conquer China, these three forced were entangled in fights and competitions in building up a united power over China. See Tao, Juyin [陶菊隐], 1983. *Beiyang Junfa Tongzhi Shiqi Shihua, 1895-1928* [History of China in the Northern Warlords period 1895-1928, 北洋军阀统治时期史话 1895-1928]. Beijing: Sanlian shudian. Isaacs, Harold. 1951. *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

groups launched numerous projects in their territories to build up their power. In their projects, the creation of new disciplines was more or less present. Some failed, and other succeeded.

By the aid of the historical experiences of three villages in this project, this chapter will conduct a historical overview on China's journey to the modern state. Firstly, I will examine the political and cultural complexion of the three villages by analyzing notions of state and discipline in Chinese classics. Then I will focus on the initial endeavors of the late Qing period. Finally, the three competitors in the 1930-40s—the Nationalists, the Japanese, and the Communists-- will be brought onto the stage one after another. Their shared concerns will reveal that a disciplinary revolution was going to make the difference—that discipline will bring a strong modern state to China.

I. State and Discipline in Imperial China

1. The Politics of Water

Water is vital to the production of agriculture, although it is not the only essential natural factor. Therefore, the activities relating to the control on water could provide a window to study political and social life of the agricultural Empire of China.

On the one hand, the water-related activities connected the imperial state with the grassroots. The imperial state actively participated into the worship on rain gods and the praying-for-rain ceremonies in the drought season, which were popular in the broad imperial territories. The officials, sometimes even the emperor himself, would join the plea for the rain, which enabled the imperial state to impose its prestige and interest over

the local religious activities.⁵ Moreover, in the area where the agriculture production relied on the irrigation, maintaining canals and dikes was regarded as a main duty of the imperial state, and “became symbolic of a well organized and efficient administration.”⁶ Therefore, the water-related activities at the grassroots could establish some kind connections between the imperial state and local communities.

On the other hand, the water-related activities could bind the different groups in a village together. Other village activities, such as the clan sacrifices and even other folk religious practices, would highlight the differences among the villagers, and split them. But the control of irrigation system and the worship of the rain gods could accommodate different interests,⁷ and the village could be represented as a community. In this respect, the water-related activities would provide chances to thoroughly study the village life in rural China. In sum, water-related activities demonstrate different aspects of village life as well as their connections to the imperial state. For these reasons, this dissertation will focus on the irrigation system and the praying-for-rain ceremonies in the three villages Nancun, Xigou, and Beiwan.

Nancun (the southern village) lies along a tributary of the Zhujiang River, a big river in south China. The residents of Nancun enjoy an ample water supply, with three creeks running across the village from different directions. Several hundred years ago Nancun was named as *Sanxi* (three creeks) after the creeks, and today the nickname of

⁵ It could be also noted that there existed striking similarities between these religious rituals and other imperial sacrifice. See Duara, Prasenjit. 1988. *Culture, Power, and the State: Rural North China, 1900-1942*, pp.135-136.

⁶ Eisenstadt, S. N. 1963. *The Political Systems of the Empires: The rise and fall of the historical bureaucratic societies*. New York: The Free Press, p.36.

⁷ See Duara, Prasenjit. 1988. *Culture, Power, and the State: Rural North China, 1900-1942*, pp.246-247.

the village, Hecun (the crop village), is still tightly connected with water.⁸ A proud villager He Shengcai explains, “Within the township, with the aid of the creeks, our crop grows best. And thus others call us the village of crop.”⁹ Water has definitely been integrated into the village identity of Nancun.

Moreover, for a long time, the irrigation system had also provided the vehicle to tie the villagers together. In Nancun, an irrigation board (*shuihui*) had been on duty for generations. As He Maolan explains, “A group of senior villagers worked to secure the watering system for the crop.” He Maolan was the child of a family whose descendants usually worked as the head for that board. “They called on our villagers to maintain the canals in the fields. They also worked with the villages upstream and downstream to make out an irrigating schedule for all.”¹⁰ The irrigation board played a role as the representative of Nancun to cooperate with or struggle against the surrounding villages. Several villagers recalled some stories to the effect that the board organized violent fights against a village right downstream.¹¹ Nancun villagers not only benefited a lot from the creeks; the watering system also influenced the social life of the villagers through the

⁸ Local archive, NCT198608, “*Xingxian*” “*Huaiqu*” *quzhi* [“Huai” town gazetteer, “兴县” “槐区” 区志], pp.7-8.

⁹ From the interview, NC200603302HSC. The biggest clan in Nancun is the He family. In the local dialect the pronunciation of the family surname He [何] is very similar to that of “crop” [he, 禾]. However, from the same interview, it is obvious that the villagers, including those from the He [何] clan, insist that the nickname of their village is “the crop village” [禾村], not “the He family village” [何村]. This nickname is also recorded in local archive, NCT198608, “*Xingxian*” “*Huaiqu*” *quzhi*, pp.7-8.

¹⁰ From the interview, NC200408211HML. The grandfather of He Maolan was the head of the village irrigation board back to the late nineteenth century. Maolan believes that several of his great grandfathers worked in the same position before. When he was a kid, he heard about their stories on solving the water disputes with other villages.

¹¹ From the interviews, NC200408211HML, NC200603302HSC, and NC200603272XZC. Many villagers provide detailed accounts on the last proposed armed fight in the late 1940s. The fight did not happen due to the intervention of the nationalist county government.

irrigation board.

While the Yangtze River makes Nancun as well as other villages prosper in the South, a tributary of the Yellow River, the acknowledged northern origin of the Chinese civilization, produces relatively mild circumstance in the arid loess plateau of the Northwest China for villagers of Xigou (the Western gulch). A creek, *Xiaohegou* (little brook), also flows sluggishly across the village and brings fortune to the villagers. Compared with the three creeks in Nancun, this little brook in Xigou could be described as tiny.¹² However, like those three creeks, it shapes Xigou not only geographically but also culturally and economically.¹³ On the one hand, the brook has created the gulch that the village is located in, and the “gulch” is a part of the village name. On the other hand, it is the little brook that attracted and nourished the residents, especially the dominant affluent family of the village, since the 1800s. As the villager Ma Yutong says, “if there was not a brook, (the forefathers of) the landlord family would not have settled down

¹² According to the local gazettes, the average flow capacity of the little creek in Xigou (Western) is 0.05m³/s. However, even in the dry season the flow capacity of the biggest creek in Nancun (Southern) is 1m³/s, and in the flood season it reaches 870m³/s. Furthermore, all the three creeks in Nancun (Southern) probably are possible to cause floods over the land, while such flood never occurred in the history of the Western Gulch. See “Mixian” xianzhi bianzuan weiyuanhui [“米县” 县志编纂委员会] (ed.), 1993, “*Mixian*” xianzhi [“Mi county” gazetteer, “米县” 县志], Xi’an: Shaanxi renmin chubanshe, . 66. Xingxian difangzhi bianxiu weiyuanhui [“兴县” 县志编修委员会] (ed.), 1992, “*Xingxian*” Xianzhi [“Xing” county gazetteer, “兴县” 县志], Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, p.111. Local archive, NCT198608, “*Xingxian*” “*Huaiqu*” quzhi, pp.21-22

¹³ Based on the population density in the 1940s, Esherick (1998) argues that the counties along the Wuding Rive—a tributary of the Yellow River—were “the wealthiest part of a very poor region.” Xigou (Western) is located within this wealthy region. In 1934, a journalist (Guan Shan, 1935: 482) recorded the “luxurious” life-style of the landlords there the deluxe and expensive articles, such as “sea food, Jingde chinaware, Longjing tea, are for daily use.” See Guan Shan [观山], 1935, “Shaan-bei (“Xigou” Majia) da dizhu” [The Big Ma Landlords in the “Western Gulch” the Northern Shaanxi, 陕北 (“西沟” 马家) 大地主], in Feng, Hefa [冯和法] (ed.), 1935, *Zhongguo Nongcun Jingji Ziliao Xubian* [The Records of the Economy in Rural China II, 中国农村经济资料续编]. Shanghai: Liming Shuju, pp.480-483. Esherick, Joseph W. 1998. “Revolution in a Feudal Fortress: “Xigou”, “Mi County”, Shaanxi, 1937-1948,” in *Modern China*, Vol. 24, No. 4: pp. 339-377.

here.”¹⁴

However, the little brook could only water a very small portion of the land in Xigou, and the harvest depends heavily on rainfall even today. Thus, although sometimes disputes over the control of the brook occurred, solving such contentions was almost nothing, compared to the praying-for-rain ceremony (*qiu yu*) organized by the dragon god society (*longwang she*). As a nominal religious society, the dragon god society in Xigou was powerful.¹⁵ “The properties owned by the dragon god temple, in the hands of the dragon god society, were far above the average of an average household in our village at that time.” Guo Zhengming, the present chair of the dragon god society, affirms the capacity of the society in the village history. “In addition, every year the society asked for money and services from every family to organize the ceremony.”¹⁶ The praying-for-rain ceremony was not only a set of religious rites, but a way to manage village affairs the year round. “The heads of the society actually worked as the village leaders, directing other community enterprises, such as village education.”¹⁷

Both Nancun and Xigou are nourished by rivers, and the politics of water became a significant part of village life. Slightly different from these two villages, the third village in this project, Beiwan (the Northern bay), is closer to the ocean, *Bohai*, instead of

¹⁴ From the interview, XG199708263MYT.

¹⁵ There was also a dragon god temple in Nancun (Southern), and it was in charge of the irrigation board. In the drought years, the irrigation board also organized praying-for-rain ceremonies, but it was not a yearly event like in Xigou. The major function of the irrigation board in Nancun was to negotiate with other villages for an irrigation scheme every year; in Xigou, their counterpart, the dragon god society, directs at least one praying-for-rain ceremony each year, which allocates various resources to the society. From the interviews, NC200408211HML, and XG19708222GZM.

¹⁶ From the interview, XG19708222GZM.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* Even today the dragon god society is related to the village administration in a way. Several on-duty chiefs, such as Guo Zhengming, retired from the village government.

rivers. Located on the coast of a Pacific bay, Beiwan is believed to be the departure place of the first oversea adventure in Chinese history.¹⁸ “Two thousand and two hundred years ago, the Chinese first emperor, *Qin Shihuang*, sent out fleets to the oversea from here. But before our ancestors settled down three hundred years ago, nobody had resided here for a long time.” Zhao Jiangde knows well about the village history. “Our forefathers probably did not know that anecdote, but they wanted to make fortune from the sea, and then settled down here.”¹⁹

The villagers of Beiwan well integrate the ocean into the village identities, and like to cite an old Chinese saying: “Those living on a mountain live off the mountain; those living near the sea live off the sea (*kao shan chi shan, kao hai chi hai*)”.²⁰ Ocean fishing has been a way to make a living for some families in generations, but always as the supplement of crop planting. Although mutual-salvation is critical in fishing business, Beiwan did not develop a fisherman alliance, but a loosely organized joint committee without a specific name. Wang Zhun, whose family owned a small boat since they settled down in the late eighteenth century, is satisfied at the multiple functions of the joint

¹⁸ According to Records of the Historian, in 219 B.C., the first emperor, Qin Shihuang, sent an alchemist to seek the elixir of life from the fairyland in the ocean. However, the exact departure place of the alchemist was not recorded at that time, and several different places are identified by the present scholars. Beiwan (Northern) is one of these disputing possibilities, but not the well acknowledged site. In 2002, the villagers set up a monument for that alchemist, and announced that their village was Xu Fu’s departure place. However, several villagers admit that the monument is set up to attract more visitors to Beiwan. From interview, BW200608071ZJD. See “Qin Shihuang Benji” [Basic Annals of the First Emperor of Qin, 秦始皇本纪], in Sima Qian[司马迁]. 1982. *Shiji* [Records of the Historian, 史记]. Vol. 1. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, p.247

¹⁹ From interview, BW200512302ZJD.

²⁰ From interviews, BW199807081WZ, BW199807093HXC, and BW200512302ZJD. The old saying should be, “those living on a mountain live off the mountain; those living near the water live off the water [Kao shan chi shan, kao shui chi shui. 靠山吃山, 靠水吃水.]” It reveals that local people should make use of local resources. However, Beiwan villagers like to emphasize the importance of the sea to them. So they replace “water” in the old saying with “sea” to suit the actual situation of the village.

committee. “The seniors from different clans gathered for special moments, such as the religious occasions. Also the fisherman family could summon the committee to manage a rescue.”²¹

Like other villages in Northeast China, Beiwan is a nice place for crop, with quite fertile soil and ideal weather. The rain is not in as scarce as in Xigou, and the population is not as dense as in Nancun.²² Water is not as rare and badly-needed here as in the other two villages, and therefore the village organization in Beiwan was not as strong as those in the other two villages. However, the annual routines of this loosely-organized committee in Beiwan were to host two birthday celebrations for the water-related gods—the dragon god and the sea goddess.²³ In Beiwan, water was still the concern that could bring the villagers together.

In the water-related activities, such as the control of irrigation system and the praying-for-rain ceremonies, different groups in the village would work together. Therefore, the above analysis of village life in Nancun, Xigou, and Beiwan, could provide a sketch of Chinese society in its long history. Before the dawn of the modern

²¹ From interview, BW199807081WZ.

²² The annual precipitation in Beiwan is about 627.2 millimeter, while in Xigou (Western) it is 451.6. As for the average population density, the figure of the Beiwan area is 197 persons per square kilometer, while in Nancun (Southern) it is two times higher: 448.4. Although the data are from the statistics in the 1950-80s, these numbers could roughly depict the situation of Beiwan: mild weather and less population pressure. See “Suixian” difangzhi bianzuan weiyuanhui [“绥县”地方志编纂委员会] (ed.), 1988, “*Suixian*” *xianzhi* [“Sui” county gazetteer, “绥县”县志], Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, pp.83 & 553. “Mixian” xianzhi bianzuan weiyuanhui (ed.), 1993, “*Mixian*” *xianzhi*, p 57. “Xingxian” difangzhi bianxiu weiyuanhui (ed.), 1992, “*Xingxian*” *Xianzhi*, p.138.

²³ In the drought year, this loosely-organized committee would also take the responsibility to organize a praying-for-rain ceremony. However, such practice was somewhat extraordinary in Beiwan (Northern), due to the abundant rainfall most of the time. Moreover, a few occasions of the praying-for-rain were always held by several villages nearby together. The villagers today believe that it was impossible to find qualified staff in any single village due to lack of experiences. From interviews, BW199807081WZ and BW200607291ZJY.

epoch, various village organizations functioned at the grassroots of the empire, and contributed to deal with local affairs of their communities.



Figure 1: The locations of the three villages

2. The Cultural-articulated Empire

While binding the villagers together, the water-related activities could also provide vehicles to connect the imperial state with local communities. During the imperial period the administrative hierarchy not only intersected with the drainage basin and interacted with different levels of the irrigation community but also participated into

the worship of the rain gods.²⁴ In this respect, the politics of water could integrate the local communities into a broad empire system.

The imperial state endeavored to establish a comprehensive control over rural area through tax collection, police control, famine control and ideological control.²⁵ However, the imperial control was never as thorough or complete as the emperor expected, and the rural control on the millions living in the imperial country was an imperfect one. Usually the imperial government refrained from interfering with rural organization and activities.²⁶ Based on the stories of the three villages in this dissertation, the imperial state was not directly present in the local water politics at most of time. The imperial officials did appear in the villages, but only at the occasions when some contentions among the neighboring villages might lead to a regional armed fight.²⁷ The villagers believe that “the imperial officials would not show up unless big trouble occurred. It was the pattern.”²⁸

On the other hand, although the three villages were distant from one another geographically, there existed similar practices in the water-related activities, which

²⁴ Duara, Prasenjit. 1988. *Culture, Power, and the State: Rural North China, 1900-1942*, pp.36-38 & 135-136.

²⁵ In his study on the rural control in Chinese empire, Hsiao Kung-chuan revealed the deliberated projects of the imperial state: the *baojia* system for police control, the *lijia* system for tax collection, the *shecang* granary for famine control, and the *xiangyue* for ideological control. Hsiao Kung-chuan, 1960. *Rural China: Imperial Control in the Nineteenth Century*.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p.321.

²⁷ There are records of armed fights only in Nancun, but not in the other two villages. Several cases of the interventions from the imperial government, as well as the nationalist government later, are provided by interviewees. One fight is recorded in a family book in a very obscure way. It is said that in around 1870s the county official did not react in time, and one person from the opponent village died in the bloody fight before it was called off by the county officials. From interviews, NC200408211HML, NC200603302HSC, and NC200603272XZC. See local archive, NCC200105: *Heshi zupu* [The family book of He, 何氏族谱], vol.1, p.57.

²⁸ From interview, NC200408211HML.

demonstrated the shared cultural background endorsed by the imperial state. The beliefs on the rain gods, as well as the sponsorship of village organizations, were supported by a collection of normative and symbolic representations sanctioned by the imperial government. The popular symbols, such as the praying-for-rain ceremonies, were adopted by the imperial state, and different levels of the bureaucratic government also performed these rituals.²⁹

In the imperial countryside, the imperial state functioned “first and foremost as a series of legitimation strategies”.³⁰ Of course, the imperial state did not only function in its cultural form, but the imperial bureaucracy did refrain from interfering with village affairs. Moreover, the imperial administration hardly called for the disciplinary training which targeted local people in the rural community. Up to the end of the nineteenth century, the well-developed imperial bureaucracy was not directly involved in the disciplinary practice at the grassroots. In this respect, the emperors were lack of the efficiency strategies to manage and govern the state. It was almost impossible for the imperial state to exercise “surveillance and control” toward its people and “the wealth and behavior of each and all” like what the early-established Western modern state had managed to achieve.³¹

3. The Imperfect Management of the Imperial State

²⁹ In the county sites of all three villages, the dragon god temples were important ritual places, especially during the year of great draught. The interviewees from the three villages are all confident that the imperial officials and even the emperor himself took part in the praying-for-rain ceremonies. From interview, XG 19708222GZM, NC200408211HML, and BW200607291ZJY.

³⁰ Duara, Prasenjit. 1988. *Culture, Power, and the State: Rural North China, 1900-1942*, p. 39.

³¹ Foucault, Michel. 1991. “Governmentality.”

A centralized political system with a well-developed bureaucratic system could be an accurate snapshot of the Chinese empire in its long history. The capacities of the imperial bureaucracy were impressive.³² The bureaucratic administration efficiently presided over the broad territory and big population. Even faced with some dramatic crisis, the bureaucratic officials landed on their feet safe and sound. For example, in the late-sixteenth century, the emperor refused to perform any duty in thirty years.³³ However, the imperial bureaucracy still did its job: taxes were gathered, and no big revolt or war threat aroused. Such efficient bureaucracy gained the Chinese empire great capacities.

However, right before the collapse of the imperial state, the imperial bureaucracy was harshly attacked by the intellectuals who proposed a reform over the imperial state. It had been argued that the bureaucracy worked for a dynasty but not for a “state”.³⁴ These reformers argued that the western notion of the state was a set of completely new ideas, but the Chinese word for the state, *Guojia*, indicates the enclosed territory governed by the emperor.³⁵ The bureaucratic officials worked for the emperor, and the

³² See Weber, Max. 1968. *Economy and Society: an Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, p.1068. Metzger, Thomas. 1970. “The State and Commerce in Imperial China”, in *Asian and African Studies*, vol. 6, pp.23-46.

³³ Since 1587, the Wanli emperor of the Ming dynasty, Zhu Yijun, refused to call in any official gatherings. The officials could not organize cooperation with their colleagues from other departments, and the positions, both at the county and at the court level, could not be replaced after the officials retired or died. See Huang, Ray, 1981, *1587, a Year of No Significance: the Ming dynasty in decline*. New Haven, MD: Yale University Press.

³⁴ See Liang, Qichao [梁启超]. 1989. “Guojia sixiang bianqian yitong [A comparative study on ideas of the state, 国家思想变迁异同论]. In *Yinbingshi heji* [The collection of Yinbingshi, 饮冰室合集]. Vol 6, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju: pp. 19-22.

³⁵ The Chinese word for the state, Guojia [国家], consists of two characters, Guo [国] and Jia [家]. The first character Guo [国] occurs in the book *Zhouli* (Book of Rituals in Zhou dynasty) in around 1000 B.C. The character indicates the enclosed territory governed by a king. The second character Jia [家] originally

every man was hardly the subject of the imperial bureaucracy.³⁶

Based on the historical records of the three villages in this project, the village people seldom caught the attention from the county administration. The officials only appeared in the villages when there would be disruptive disputes, and this was the dominant working pattern for the county government to deal with the imperial countryside. As a result, the efficient and self-contained bureaucracy operated the broad empire through the managements in very rough styles. The statistics for management underlying the modern bureaucracy never became a working agenda of the imperial government. Although the local government was required to keep records of the residents within their domain, most of the time, the local administrators were unable to provide an accurate name list.³⁷ This rough-style administration gave the imperial bureaucracy flexibility. In fact, that could partly explain the maintenance of the imperial bureaucracy in the above case of the sabotage from the emperor. When about one half of the positions were unfilled, the officials still could fulfill their duties to carry out the routine administration over the broad territories. The immensity of the imperial bureaucracy was in fact a false impression caused by the low-level workload requirements of local administration.

Of course, the rough working-style of the bureaucracy was not the result of the

refers to the manor of the ministers (dafu) at that time. In *Shangshu* (Book of Documents), another classic almost written at the same time as *Zhouli*, Guojia [国家] just appears as a word to indicate the dynasty. See Gan Huaizhen, 2004, *Huanquan, liyi yu jingdian quanshi* [Imperial power, ritual, and the classical interpretations: a study on the ancient history of Chinese politics, 皇权、礼仪与经典诠释：中国古代政治史研究]. Taipei: Taiwan daxue chubanshe.

³⁶ Liang, Qichao. 1989. "Guojia sixiang bianqian yitong

³⁷ See Huang, Ray, 1981, 1587, *A Year Of No Significance: The Ming Dynasty In Decline*.

inability of the imperial officials. These officials were never required or trained as industrious clerks in the modern bureaucratic ways. The major way to select imperial officials was through imperial exams, which rarely shared anything with the civil service exams at present. Only the Confucian doctrines were tested, and therefore the officials were trained first and foremost as Confucian scholars. Therefore, the imperial officials could hardly be qualified as the personnel in the modern bureaucracy.³⁸

Another feature that could define the imperfect management of Chinese empire lies in the absence of the imperial bureaucracy in the disciplinary practices over local people. Discipline is an important part of the Confucian classics, and self-discipline is valued as the basic training to achieve the management over a family and then a state.³⁹ However, the Confucian doctrine of “discipline” worked differently from the discipline in the modern epoch. Firstly, only the self-discipline among the intellectual was tested through the examination system of the imperial government. More specifically, the Confucian discipline is mainly about morality. At this point, moral discipline actually laid the basis for the Chinese bureaucracy.

Although only the disciplined literati concerned the imperial government, Confucianism did contribute to the disciplinary forces for Chinese people. Such

³⁸ See Huang, Chun-chieh. 1994. “Some observations and reflections.” in Brandauer, Frederick P., and Chun-chieh Huang (eds.). *Imperial Rulership and Cultural Change in Traditional China*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press.

³⁹ The emphasis on self-discipline could be found in the first sentence of *Daxue*, one of the four basic books of Confucianism. Self-discipline [xiushen, 修身], household management [qijia, 齐家], state governance [zhiguo, 治国], and the establishment of a heavenly world [pingtianxia, 平天下] are arranged in an epistemological order. Only those who are well disciplined could be successful in managing the family, and then be able to work for the administration. Finally, a heavenly world will be built up by the self-disciplined persons. See Huang, Chun-chieh and Kuang-ming Wu, 1993, “Homo-cosmic Continuum: Normativity and its Difficulties in Ancient China,” in Huang Chun-Chieh, Erik J. Zürcher (eds.), *Norms and the State in China*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, pp. 3-28.

discipline was carried out through the lineage organizations. In the literal meaning of the Chinese word state (*guojia*), the state (*guo*) is connected with the family (*jia*). The family system is believed to function as the connector between the individual and all other entities, including the imperial bureaucracy.⁴⁰ In the basic principles (*tiaomu*) of Confucianism, family management has been put right between self-discipline and state governance. A person's behaviors within the family are assertions of the effects from self-discipline. Only those who could fulfill their family duties could be regarded as well-disciplined, and are then qualified to work for the emperor. In this respect, families and lineage organizations could be regarded as the base of the imperial state, and the family, instead of the state, was the actual guardian on the behaviors of the members.

The kinship organizations of the three villages in this study could provide examples about the role of the family to discipline their members and then to maintain the social order of the imperial state. Firstly, in all three villages, lineage organizations played an important role during the imperial time. Among the three, Nancun enjoyed a network of tightly-knit and powerful clans, which was a usual situation in south China.⁴¹ About ninety percent of the residents there were from the He family, and in the peak time, over fifty percent of the village land was listed as the properties of the lineage organizations, and the clan also provided its members education and other kinds of

⁴⁰ Belonging to a later generation after Liang Qichao, scholars like Liang Shumin could take time to study traditional Chinese culture and Chinese society. In 1949, Liang Shumin published *Zhongguo wenhua yaoyi*. In this monograph on Chinese culture, Liang Shumin achieved a similar judgment as Liang Qichao about the statelessness of Chinese empire. See Liang Shumin [梁漱溟], 2003, *Zhongguo wenhua yaoyi* [The essentials of Chinese culture, 中国文化要义]. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe.

⁴¹ Kulp, D.H. 1925. *Country Life in South China: the sociology of familism, Volume I. Phenix village, Kwantung, China*. New York: Bureau of Publications.

welfare.⁴² Similar things happened in Xigou. The Ma Guanyutang kinship group controlled almost every inch of the village land. They were so wealthy that the rest of the villagers all worked as tenants or servants for the families.⁴³ Beiwan was an immigrant village which came into being in the late-eighteenth century, and the villagers belonged to several big families. “When the villagers got into trouble, they would seek for aid within their family members, not from villagers with different family names.” Guo Zecun is sure of the things that his clan could do.⁴⁴

Despite the various economic and social arrangements in the three villages, kinship organizations are the key to understand the village life in Imperial China.⁴⁵ In addition to providing supports for their family members, kinship organizations also functioned as a basic unit for other village affairs. For instance, the head positions in the village associations for the irrigation or the worship of the rain gods were occupied by the leaders of the clans.⁴⁶ These seniors were moguls in these villages. They spoke for their clans and also acted in the name of their villages.

Moreover, by the aid of Confucian doctrines, kinship organizations also imposed disciplines over their members, which created habits of discipline at the grassroots. The family books (*jiapu*) usually not only listed the names of family members, but also

⁴² From interview, NC200604031HZH.

⁴³ Zhang Wentian. 1994. “Research on Yang Village,” in Zhang Wentian, *The collected research papers on Jin-Shaan region of Zhang Wentian*. Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, pp.123-287.

⁴⁴ From interview, BW200607242GZC. Rawski (1986) conducts a survey on the development of this Ma landlord clan and its functions. See Rawski, Evelyn. 1986a, “The Ma Landlords of Yang-chia-kou in Late Ch’ing and Republican China,” in Patricia Ebrey and James Watson, (eds.). *Kinship Organization in Late Imperial China, 1000–1949*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press: pp. 245–73.

⁴⁵ Rawski, Evelyn. 1986b. *Kinship Organization in Late Imperial China, 1000-1940*. Berkeley, Calif.: The University of California Press.

⁴⁶ From interview, XG 19708222GZM, NC200408211HML, and BW200607291ZJY.

recorded and interpreted the basic principles of the Confucian doctrines. The He clan of Nancun listed sixteen regulations on behaviors in the family book, which was composed in the late nineteenth century, and these regulations were regarded as the “heirloom” of their family. These regulations include the appropriate manners to treat parents and siblings, as well as the endorsements on crop planting and Confucian education (*gen du wei ben*).⁴⁷ Similar emphasis could be found in the family book of the Mas in Xigou, which was titled as “a code for the clan” (*jiaxun*).⁴⁸ No family book or a clan code has been found in Beiwan, due to the short history of this immigrant village. However, several senior villagers talked about some old sayings, such as “pious to relatives and kind to neighbors” (*xiao qin you lin*) and “watch your step to worship your ancestor” (*shen zhong zhui yuan*). These old villagers believe that these saying are segments of the guidelines issued by their families.⁴⁹ In Imperial China, it was the family that occupied the position to discipline and watch over their members to behave in accordance with the Confucian principles.

In the long history of the Chinese empire, the emperor did endeavor to establish a complete and thorough control over rural area. In the imperial time, the centralized bureaucracy were established throughout the broad territories and seemingly operated in well organized and efficient ways. However, in contrast to the bureaucracy in the early-established modern states, the imperial bureaucracy was not very efficient in the grassroots management. In fact, at most of time the imperial government refrained to

⁴⁷ See local archive, NCC200105: *Heshi zupu* [The family book of He, 何氏族谱], vol.1: pp. 13-15.

⁴⁸ See local archive, XGC200510: *Mashi jiazu zhi* [The family book of Ma, 马氏家族志], pp. 34-43.

⁴⁹ From interview, BW199807093HXC, BW200601031ZJD, BW200607301YT.

intervene into local affairs. On the one hand, the imperial administration did not govern over local communities directly. Although the state imposed various controls over Chinese village, the imperial officials in fact had to rely on local gentries to exercise their controls. Local gentries were not merely the representatives of the imperial state, but also worked for the interests of their communities and their own. On the other hand, the imperial bureaucracy usually was present in the disciplinary practice at the grassroots. Although the Confucian doctrines were used by the emperor to discipline and select bureaucrats, the imperial state did not directly impose discipline over its population. The lineage organizations and the heads of these organizations stood between the imperial state and the villagers. Therefore, these differences set the Chinese imperial state apart from the modern states originating in Western Europe.

In the imperial China, the imperial bureaucracy actually lacked the capabilities to govern rural communities directly. In order to achieve the control over the countryside, the imperial state had to maintain the political and economic equilibrium among the half-autonomous local communities with great care. As long as the balance was disturbed in the late-nineteenth century, the imperial state became almost entirely ineffectual.⁵⁰ As a result, the imperial state had to face its doom.

II. State-building of the Late Imperial China

1. Self Strengthening of the Government

Due to both devastating domestic rebellions and upsetting foreign encroachments,

⁵⁰ Hsiao Kung-chuan, 1960. *Rural China: Imperial Control in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 368-370.

the imperial state of Chinese had been on the verge of collapse since mid-nineteenth century. For more than a decade, the Taiping rebels swept over the prosperous southern provinces and had cut off a great amount of the revenues for the imperial government. At the same time, the emperor had to admit the privileges of the western merchants and missionaries after the military defeat by the British, French, and other western troops. The great economic and military pressures forced the imperial government—the Qing court—to set out “on a course of state strengthening and modernization”.⁵¹ Within the imperial state, these efforts initiated deep changes.

The modern state-building projects started at the new policies reform (*xinzheng*) of the last dynastic Qing government in late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Since the 1860s, a group of reformists in the court fought against the standpatters of Chinese tradition by emphasizing the importance of introducing the western institutions (*zhong ti xi yong*).⁵² A reform was carried out to turn the court into a civil government by establishing specialized functional ministries and branches, such as the bureaus of taxation (*lijin ju*) and diplomatic department of state (*zongli yamen*). New economic policies also encouraged businessmen to develop their own industries. Moreover, the army were equipped with western arms, and also organized and drilled in the western way. The new policies brought vigor and prosperity back to the imperial China, and sustained

⁵¹ Duara, Prasenjit. 1988. *Culture, Power, and the State: Rural North China, 1900-1942*, p.2.

⁵² The term “*zhong ti xi yong*” arouse influential debates since late Qing. It was brought up by an important reformist, Zhang Zhidong. Zhang urged to study western techniques and institutions, in order to save China from the collapse. However, both the conservatives and the radicals disliked this idea. The former rejected any changes of the traditional political and social system, and the latter advocated a complete westernization by devastating all Confucian doctrines. See Bays, Daniel. 1978, *China Enters the Twentieth Century: Chang Chih-tung and Issues of a New Age, 1895-1909*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

the Qing court for about another fifty years.

The reform initiated transformations and set the imperial state on the way of a modern state. The changed relations between the village and the imperial government in the late imperial period could shed light on these fundamental changes. As has been discussed above, in the long history of the Chinese empire, the imperial state could not impose direct control over local communities, and had to allow different types of village associations, such as clans, religious societies or cooperative alliances, to exert the authorities in dealing with village affairs. During the reform, the imperial state might not aim to destroy the village organizations, but the establishment of the new fiscal system caused significant changes to the leadership of the village organizations, and even converted the connections between the government system and rural communities.

In order to finance wars and the newly-established public works, the imperial state began to demand new taxes, levy (*tankuan*), from the peasants. The increasing amount of taxes required a group of clerks specialized in tax collection, especially at the county level. Since the 1870s, the taxation offices had been established gradually as a branch of the county administration. All three villages in this project witnessed this transformation of local administration. The Xigou villagers were among the earliest groups that sensed the changes in taxation. Early in 1874, a civil bureau (*minju*) was set up by the county government to raise money for local construction, such as new schools and bridges.⁵³ Moreover, different from the collection of the land tax, the levying taxes

⁵³ After the establishment of the civil bureau, two significant riots happened in the county. In 1885, the county administrator embezzled the levies for the construction of bridges, which caused him to be besieged by peasants nearby. In 1908, the administrator decided to collect a new levy for each chimney the residents used, which had to be called off after the county prison was broken into by peasants to save those who refused to pay this levy. See *Mizhi xianzhi*, p12.

were not allocated to the landowners but to a village as a whole, and the village had to make a plan to allocate the burden.⁵⁴ As a result, some one in the village must stand out to work on it, and the new taxation also caused the emergences of village functionaries. This group would function as the representatives of the government, and presented a new connection between the state and local communities.

2. New Management over the village

The self-strengthening projects of the imperial government saved the Qing court from immediate collapse after experiencing serious internal and external crises. Furthermore, these changes also set the Qing court onto a road different from the former imperial state. A new taxation was established to facilitate the government to collect money from peasants. As a result, the collection of the increasing taxes caused the closer-involvement of the imperial state into village life. Traditionally the county government was the end of the bureaucratic administration, and it seldom intervened with village affairs. In the village, the leading-positions in village organizations were always occupied by the gentry (*shishen*), a group of villagers whose status was officially recognized through passing the imperial examinations in selecting officials. The gentry functioned not only as heads the village but also the helpers of local administration.⁵⁵ Now the new levying taxation would cause some changes in village politics.

In imperial China, the county officials refrained from interfering with village affair. The county officials seldom showed up in the village, while the clerks and runners

⁵⁴ Duara, Prasenjit. 1988. *Culture, Power, and the State: Rural North China, 1900-1942*, pp.64-65.

⁵⁵ Fei Xiaotong. 1953. *China's Gentry*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

from the county visited the village occasionally as messengers. Due to the increase of taxes, the clerks of the county government had to visit the village more frequently, and they even took part in the tax collection to force the villagers to meet the quota.⁵⁶

Through their closer involvement with the village, the county clerks actually connected the village with the local administration more directly. The clerk's practices in the village "constituted an informally legitimized system of local bureaucratic government".⁵⁷

Therefore, in late imperial China, the new village management, which was characterized by the special functions of the county clerks, represented a transformation that was happening in the imperial bureaucracy.

On the other hand, the continuous increase of state demands also forced the former leading groups of local gentry to withdraw from the village management. A new group of people, who aimed to enrich themselves by aiding the state, then took over the village leadership.⁵⁸ Instead of functioning as local protectors like the local gentry, the newly-rising village leaders were devoted to achieve state goals and ignored the interests of their fellow villagers. This reformation of village leadership destroyed the traditional forms of authority and changed the organizations of power in rural China. Therefore, in the late imperial period, the imperial state had altered its relationship with rural communities by being deeply involved in village affairs. In this respect, the imperial state efficiently penetrated its power into rural communities.

⁵⁶ See Reed, Bradly. 2000. *Talons and Teeth: County Clerks and Runners in the Qing Dynasty*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p.249.

⁵⁸ Duara refers the new leaders as "entrepreneurial brokers," who were fee-charging agents of the state. In Duara's view, they were arbitrary and oppressive. See Duara, Prasenjit. 1988, *Culture, Power, and the State*, pp 43-47.

Fundamental changes happened in the late imperial state, and the replacement of village leaders was just the beginning of the doom of local gentry. In the long Chinese history, the Confucian education (*xuetong*) was seen as the connector between political orthodox (*zhengtong*) and moral orthodox (*daotong*).⁵⁹ In over one thousand years, the gentry acquired their status through passing the imperial examinations, which were used to select officials through examining their knowledge on Confucianism. Therefore, the imperial examination system laid the foundations for the leading roles of the gentry in local communities politically and culturally. However, the Qing court declared to abolish the imperial examination in 1905. This abolition not only challenged the absolute role of Confucianism in political and cultural systems of the empire, but also shook the gentry rule at the ground level. After losing the endorsement from the empire, the gentry were going to lose their moral and political leadership, which was gained through their success in Confucian education.

In the three villages of this project, the abolition of imperial examinations must have destroyed the dreams of the younger Confucian disciples. A Beiwan villager, Zhao Jiangbin, believes this change drove his uncle crazy. After Jiangbin's grandfather could finally feed the families with the help of his three grown-up sons, the youngest son became the first in the family to receive some Confucian education. "My grandfather expected to gain respect from other villagers, if my uncle could pass the exam." However, it was called off after the young man had spent about ten years on preparing. "My mother told me that my youngest uncle was gentle and humble. However, when I

⁵⁹ See Du Weiming. 2000. *Dao, xue, zheng: lun rujia zhishi fenzi* [Morality, education and politics: on Confucians, 道·学·政：论儒家知识分子]. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe.

was a child I saw him as a hotspur, who always blamed the families.”⁶⁰ Some gentry families did successfully adjusted themselves to the new education. In Xigou, the Ma landlords soon sent their children to the new-style universities in cities and even abroad. However, the fate of the young generation had been changed, and the future of the village was then uncertain. More and more educated youth chose to stay in the cities, instead of returning to the villages. As a result, the village might have been deprived of educated and qualified leaders in the future.

With the establishment of new taxation and the abolition of imperial examinations, the leadership of the gentry in villages was weakened. Through replacing the village leaders, the imperial state had already successfully gained substantial control over local communities. The new policy reform functioned as a state-building project, which built up efficient state apparatus down to the village. Moreover, the state-building projects shook the disciplinary power of Confucianism in village life. While the Confucian followers were losing their power in village life, their privileges in lineage organizations were also shaking. The authorities of kinship organizations, as well as the Confucian norms supporting the clans, were going down in villages, and the discipline imposed by the family values of Confucianism became disintegrated. Meanwhile, the newly-established organizations, such as the new school system and the police agencies, had stepped into rural areas and fostered new disciplinary powers.⁶¹ Before the abdication of the last Qing emperor in 1912, some children from all three villages were sent to western-

⁶⁰ From interview, BW200607193ZJB.

⁶¹ The current studies focus on the influence of the police station on everyday life in urban area. See Dray-Novey, Alison. 1993. “Spatial Order and Police in Imperial Beijing”, in *Journal of Asian Studies* Vol.52, No.4, pp.885-922. In fact, similar transformation also happened in towns and villages, where police stations had been established.

style schools, instead of old-style Confucian seminaries.⁶² In addition, almost at the same time, in the town sites of the three villages, policemen began to become powerful figures supervising everyday life and sustain order.⁶³ The police also stationed in some villages, which were the sites of regional markets or for military purpose. Beiwan was a coastal village, which also located close to a railroad. A police station was set up in the village around 1906.⁶⁴

During the new-policy reform, the imperial state endeavored to connect the state bureaucracy with the village more closely. Some village functionaries now became the state staff, instead of the figures that represented both the state and their community while “linking the state with the countryside”.⁶⁵ In addition, Confucianism had been gradually driven out of local communities as a disciplinary power, and new disciplines would take over the rural communities as well as the cities. The old imperial China had set off onto a new road.

III. The Divided China and the Unified Agenda

⁶² In 1911, the Ma landlord family set up a new-style school right in Xigou, after three other new schools were established in neighboring areas. *Mashi jiazhu zhi*, p.14; *Mixian xianzhi*, p. 511. Around the same time, an elementary school was set up by the He clans in Nancun. *Xianxian xianzhi*, p. 637. Although there was no school in Beiwan (northern), an education board (quanxue suo) was appointed to manage the three new schools in 1906. *Suixian xianzhi*, p. 8-9.

⁶³ Since 1902, police agencies were established in the county sites of the three villages. A police were stationed in Beiwan as well as other 22 villages since 1906. *Suixian xianzhi*, p.391. From interview, BW200607282ZJL. In 1907, after the policemen had been stationed in twelve districts, a police school began to recruit policemen in Nancun. *Xinxian xianzhi*, pp.22 & 551. The police system was relatively weak in Xigou, but a village station was finally set up in the county site in 1909. *Mixian xianzhi*, p.465.

⁶⁴ Although the policemen were stationed in Beiwan, they mainly dealt with the incidents related to the railroad or the custom. Their intervention into village affairs of Beiwan was very limited. From interview, BW200607282ZJL.

⁶⁵ See Duara, 1988, *Culture, Power, and the State*, p.64.

1. The Newly-claimed Territories

The reforms of Qing court did not save it from its doom. After the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1911, China experienced great turbulence in the following two decades. Warfare hardly ceased among the warlords, who built separatist kingdoms and disdained the nominal national government. Although regimes changed rapidly at both the central and local levels during this period, most of the ruling groups continued the state-building projects since the late imperial period. The taxation system down to the village was in execution to meet the basic fiscal needs of the regimes, and village affairs were still managed by the representatives of the governments.⁶⁶

In 1929-1931, there was a short period of unity over China, at least nominally. Although the separatist warlords were still powerful in some regions and the communists held some areas in several provinces, Chinese Nationalist Party claimed control over the majority of the territory at that time. The three villages, Nancun, Xigou and Beiwan, were all under the influence of the nationalists for a while, while the nationalist power in Nancun was relative strong, while in the other two the regional warlords were still powerful. Soon these villages, like the entire country, were turned to the hands of different political powers. Shortly after the Japanese started its conquest over Northeast China in 1931, Beiwan, as a far southern village of Manchuria, was taken over by the Japanese invaders. With Japanese invasion into the inland, Chinese nationalists and communists finally achieved an uneasy coalition to fight against Japan. Due to its closeness to a major communist base, Xigou was allocated to the communists as its

⁶⁶ Gillin, Donald. 1967. *Warlord: Yen Hsi-shan in Shansi Province, 1911-1949*. Princeton: The Princeton University Press.

garrison area. In 1941, the communists dismissed the nationalist officials in the Xigou area, and since then Xigou was completely incorporated into the communist base areas. Although Japanese air force once poured bombs over the neighboring area of Nancun, the village was steadily controlled by the nationalist government since the 1920s.

The Nationalists, the Communists, and the Japanese, these three political powers separately established their controls over the three villages, as well as their divided bases in China. The political and military separations brought the villages in different areas into different orbits. In order to analyze the building-up of modern state power over rural China during the national war against Japanese, the differences and similarities in the efforts of Nationalists, Communists, and Japanese should be highlighted through examining the experiences of the three villages.

The three political powers were all new at managing rural communities, but the competition among them forced each to build up their power over their newly-claimed territories. Like the Qing court, Nationalist, Communists, and Japanese all tried to expand their authority into villages to impose increasing economic exploitation on the rural areas. Similar policies were enforced in taxation and village management by the three competing powers.

Before the resistance war, the Nationalist central government hardly had access to either taxes or levies, which were always retained by separatist regional governments. Claiming to support the war in full sail, a new policy guaranteed the nationalist central government the role as the only collector of land taxes since 1938.⁶⁷ Tax collectors were

⁶⁷ See Kangri zhanzheng shiqi guomin zhengfu caizheng jiji zhanglue cuoshi yanjiu ketizu. *Kangri zhanzheng shiqi guomin zhengfu caizheng jiji zhanglue cuoshi yanjiu* [The research on the economy policies

sent to villages as the agents of the central government, and the collections were allocated directly following the directives from the central government. Moreover, compulsory purchase of crops (*zhenggou*) and other farm products was also implemented in Nancun and other nationalist villages at the wartime. The local agents of the nationalist government could purchase any product of a peasant family with the set price (Eastman, 1984). The power of the government agents in Nancun increased dramatically, and they were then condemned as vicious accessories of the government by the Nancun villagers.⁶⁸

In Xigou, the communists also benefited from the tax collection and compulsory purchase of farm products. With the expansion of the war, the communists had to raise taxes in order to feed an increasing number of government staff and soldiers. Xigou villagers witnessed a continual increase in their taxes. Before 1941, the tax-exemption point was high enough to free many poor families from paying tax. However, the exemption point was drastically cut from 533 to 200 pounds of grain per person in 1941.⁶⁹ More households of Xigou started to pay taxes since then. Moreover, progressive taxation (*leijin shuizhi*) was enforced which laid heavy burdens on the affluent Ma landlord families.⁷⁰

As in the nationalist Nancun, the enforcement of heavy taxation required an

of the nationalist government during the resistance war, 抗日战争时期国政府财政经济战略措施研究]. Chongqing: Xi'nan caijing daxue chubanshe, 1987, pp.32-35.

⁶⁸ From interview, NC200604131HJS.

⁶⁹ Selden, Mark. *The Yenan Way in Revolutionary China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, p.183.

⁷⁰ Based on Zhang Wentian's survey on Xigou in 1942, the account book of a prosperous landlord, Ma Weixin, was in the red in 1941. About 72% of his income was paid to the communist government under different categories. See Zhang Wentian, "Mizhixian Xigou diaocha", pp. 123-287.

efficient local administration. After the communists took over the Xigou region, new village heads were promoted and the township governments were also set on track.⁷¹ In some communist bases, free elections were held to choose local heads, and this election policies helped the communists gain supports from both the former leading groups and the unprivileged of rural community.⁷² In addition, a Three-Thirds political system (*sansan zhi*) was proposed by the communists in their bases.⁷³ The communists, other progressives and middling-elements were all limited to hold one-third of the seats in the assemblies as well as the governments.

The communists intentionally kept the former functionaries of local administration, while party members were also recruited into the governments. Therefore, the family members of the Ma landlords got positions in the communist joint government at different levels. A member of the Ma landlord family was elected as the magistrate of the district (*qu*) which directly supervised Xigou. There were even three Ma's from Xigou (Ma Ruitang, Ma Xingmin, and Ma Yuzhang) in the congress of the border region.⁷⁴ At the same time, the younger generation from the poor families was chosen to work for the district government for the first time.⁷⁵ Through the coalition government, the communists successfully rooted themselves into their bases.

In contrast, during the Japanese occupation in 1932-1945, no significant changes

⁷¹ *Mizhi xianzhi*, p.96.

⁷² Chen, Yung-fa. 1986. *Making Revolution. the Communist Movement in Eastern and Central China, 1937-1945*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p.243.

⁷³ See Selden, Mark, 1971, *The Yanan way in Revolutionary China*, pp.99-161.

⁷⁴ Local Archive, XGX19411100, "Shaan-Gan-Ning bianqu di'er jie canyihui yiyuan minglu" [The list of the representatives of the second border-region assembly, 陕甘宁边区第二届参议会会议员名录], Shaan-Gan-Ning bianqu canyihui, 1941/11.

⁷⁵ From interview, XG199805261LZY.

in either village management or taxation happened in the Beiwan area. Compared with the nationalist Nancun and the communist Xigou, land taxes in Beiwan were not especially high.⁷⁶ However, in the Beiwan area, the number of items subjected to taxation kept on increasing during the Japanese occupation. Specific taxes were collected on transportation, liquors, flour, and almost on every business activities. Meanwhile, the Japanese also initiated reforms in local administration to facilitate tax collection. The district government (*qu/xiang*), an intermediate administration between the county government and villages, was established in the Beiwan area during wartime.⁷⁷ Before that, the county government had managed over one thousand villages directly. Since the establishment of the district governments, presumably not only the workload of the county government was relieved but its efficiency was highly enhanced.

The three contestants, who competed in gaining over entire China, all made efforts to enforcing the taxation and local administration in governing their territories. The three villages all witnessed a reinforcement of local administration. It seemed that the competing political powers had put their hopes of defeating the opponents on promoting an efficient local administration. The establishment of local government below the county level was a vital step in building up state power at the ground level. The Qing court did place their agents in villages, but it did not save the imperial state from the collapse. Therefore, efficient local administration should not be the only key for

⁷⁶ During the Japanese occupation, the burden of levies increased. See *Suizhong xianzhi*, p. 314. The heavy burden annoyed Beiwan villagers, but it did not exceed the tolerant limits too much. In 1932-1945, a rough average shows that the villagers paid about 30% of their harvest for land taxes and levies. From interview, BW199807081WZ.

⁷⁷ *Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi jilin sheng weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao yanjiu weiyuanhui. Riwei Tongzhi Dongbei dashiji*, 139.

the state to build up its power. A comparison among the three competitors should go beyond the projects on the building of state apparatus.

2. The Politics of Land

The communists, the nationalists, and the Japanese shared similar agenda to reinforce the control over rural area. However, the communist land policies declaring in the late-1920s set the communists apart from the nationalists and the Japanese. The land redistribution among villagers was proposed by the communists: villagers who made a living by working in others' land were going to be allocated a plot under their names, while the former landlords would lose a great amount of land which they had owned over generations. Through redistributing the basic means of production in rural areas, the communists tried to attack on the existent social structures and social relations in rural areas, and then to fortify support from the rural communities. To the contrary, the nationalists and the Japanese believed that they could claim their authority in rural areas by fighting against the communist proposal. The disagreements over land policies were vital aspects of the divided China during the wartime period. The stories of Xigou, Nancun, and Beiwan would shed light on the sharp divisions among the communists, the nationalists and the Japanese.

The land is endowed with specific meanings in China, whose major population lived on agricultural production. People living in rural areas are believed to be bound to the land.⁷⁸ In China's long history, Chinese people bound themselves with the soil, for

⁷⁸ The founding father of Chinese sociology, Fei Xiaotong, titled his book on the foundations of Chinese society as 'From the Soil' [*Xiangtu zhongguo*]. The book *Xiangtu zhongguo* was first published in Chinese

“the soil is the root of their lives.”⁷⁹ In rural areas, land is not only the means of production for people living there, but also a symbolic connection between the farmers and their local community in a narrow sense and then the Chinese society in a broad sense.

Located in a relatively prosperous region within the barren northwest China, Xigou witnessed a high degree of land concentration. According to a survey conducted by a communist top leader Zhang Wentian in 1942, almost all land in Xigou were in the hands of one group—the Ma landlord family.⁸⁰ The fifty-five Ma landlord households constituted over twenty percent of the whole village households, while the other households worked either as tenants or as servants for the landlords.⁸¹ Consequently, in

in 1947, and it was translated into English in 1992. Fei himself chose “From the Soil” as his title to emphasize that the soil is the root of the people living in the countryside, who are the foundation of Chinese society. Some related articles had already been published in English in 1945, titled *Earthbound China*, which was initially given by Fei’s advisor Bronislaw Malinowski as the title for Fei’s dissertation (*Peasant life in China*). [Based on an interview with Fei Xiaotong, conducted by Zhu Xueqin, http://boxun.com/hero/2006/zhuxq/5_2.shtml (viewed on 2006/10/29).] Fei, Xiaotong, 1948, *Xiangtu zhongguo*, Shanghai: Guanchashe. Fei, Xiaotong, 1992, *From the soil: the foundations of Chinese society*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Fei Xiaotong, 1945, *Earthbound China: a study of rural economy in Yunnan*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Fei Xiaotong, 1939, *Peasant life in China: a field study of country life in the Yangtze Valley*, London: Routledge & K. Paul.

⁷⁹ Fei, Xiaotong, 1992, *From the soil: the foundations of Chinese society*, p.38. As well as the discussion the importance of water, some studies emphasize the significant role of the soil in the creation of Chinese civilization, as well as the establishment of the imperial state. Ho, Ping-ti. 1959. *Studies on the Population of China, 1368-1953*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

⁸⁰ Although Ma is a typical surname among northwestern Muslims, the Mas in Xigou are not Islamic, but Han Chinese. According to the survey, 55 out of 271 households in Xigou made their living through renting out the land they owned. All these 55 households were from the same Ma lineage: 51 households were descendants of one ancestor (*Guangyu tang*) within five generations, while the other 4 households were from other branches of the Ma lineage. In Xigou, there were 53 households who were offspring of this great-great-grandfather (*Guangyu tang*). Excluding two households who used up their fortune in opium, the average household of this family had about 280 *shang* (140 acre) land under their names. Zhang, Wentian, 1994, “Mixian Xigou diaocha”, pp. 135-140.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* The two bankrupt offspring households of *Guangyu tang* were only exceptions. These two families got aid from other lineage members in the village and their family members in cities. Among the 216 non-landlord households, about 150 households either rented lands from the Ma landlords or worked as hired hands, and most of the others were either servants or handicraftsmen to meet the needs of the landlords.

the view of the villagers, land was a symbol of the fortune of the Ma landlords and also the connector which tied the others with the landlords.

“The Ma landlord family owned a great amount of land, and we all ploughed in their lands.” Ma Yujun, whose family was from the extended-lineage of the Ma landlord family and worked for them for generations, still regards the landlords as a glory of the village. “In the old time, the outside people may not know about our county. But they definitely knew of our village, because the landlord family was very, very famous.”⁸²

This judgment could be verified by Zhang Wentian’s survey report: “Xigou in the Shaan-Gan-Ning border area is renowned for the landlord group, Ma *Guangyu tang*.”⁸³ As a matter of fact, Xigou could be described as the kingdom of the Ma landlord family, who owned plenty of land and then were identified as the trademark of the village by other people inside and outside of the village.

The land concentration in Xigou could not find a counterpart in north China.⁸⁴ Like the majority rural residents of the North, most of Beiwan (northern) villagers themselves owned a small plot even before the communists came. Although their lands were usually not enough to feed their families, the small landholders in Beiwan did not live under the shadow of powerful landlords. Therefore, in contrast to the polarity between the Ma landlords and their tenants/servants in Xigou, the status pyramid could be used to describe the stratification among Beiwan villagers before the communists came. The two biggest landholder households of the village each owned above 300 *mu*

⁸² From interview, XG199708223MYJ.

⁸³ Zhang, Wentian, 1994, “Mixian Xigou diaocha”, p. 123.

⁸⁴ Huang, Philip. 1985, *The Peasant Economy and Social Change in North China*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University.

(50 acres) of land; and thirteen households were entitled to around 40 *mu* (7 acres).⁸⁵ The smallholder households with an average of 2 *mu* (0.4 acres) constituted three-fourths of the population of the district that Beiwan belonged to.⁸⁶

Although most of the villagers in Beiwan still needed to rent land from the big landholders, there was no powerful landlord group as the Ma family in Xigou. Moreover, due to the development of commercial activities in towns and cities in neighboring areas, the big landholders all invested in some business outside of the village and even lived in the cities most of the time. “Land was the backup of the rich families.” The villagers, such as Wang Zhun, knew well that land ownership had different meanings for different people. “However, to most of the villagers, the small plot they owned was the basis of their lives, although they had to rent more land or worked in cities.”⁸⁷ Before the communist revolution, land was a common asset for Beiwan people, but not a primary standard to divide the residents into different groups as it worked in Xigou.

In South China, strong kinship organizations have characterized this area for centuries.⁸⁸ Nancun could be a supportive case for this description. This pattern still holds true today as the majority of the Nancun villagers are from the five branches of the He lineage, while most of the rest are from the Cai families. Back to the 1940s, the He sub-lineages were the biggest landholders in Nancun. In the Nancun district, over 40% of

⁸⁵ From interview, BW199807083ZZX.

⁸⁶ Local archive, BWX19491201, “‘Suixian’ ge qu tugaqian jieji qingkuang biao” [The class-status of “Sui” county population by district, “绥县”各区土改前阶级情况表], “Suixian” xianwei, 1949/12.

⁸⁷ From interview, BW199807111WZ.

⁸⁸ See Freedman, Maurice, 1966, *Chinese Lineage and Society: Fukien and Kwangtung*, New York: The Athlone Press.

the land was not under the name of individuals, but in the control of the lineages.⁸⁹

Before the communist came, although most of the Nancun villagers owned some land like their counterparts in Beiwan, the land under each person's name was less than 0.5 *mu* (0.2 acre).⁹⁰ It was impossible for most Nancun residents to make a living on their own land as Beiwan villagers did. However, the big amount of lineage land guaranteed the lineage members to rent a plot or get some aid. "Every descendant could ask for renting the land owned by the lineage." He Shengcai, whose father was a clan manager, talked about the importance of the lineage land (*zuchang*). "Moreover, the incomes from these lands would be used to educate boys or as some bonus for each male."⁹¹ Shengcai is clear that lineage lands connected each villager with their lineages. Therefore, before the communists came, in the view of Nancun villagers, land was neither status divider between the rich and poor (as in Xigou) nor a common asset for each villager (as in Beiwan), but was primarily associated with the lineage membership.

In the three villages, land was controlled by different groups. The different patterns of land ownership are summarized in the following table (Table 3.1), which also

⁸⁹ In the 1951 summary on land reform, it was stated that "in Ba district, 41.5% land was under the name of lineages." Furthermore, the report from the Ba district pointed out that He village was the top of the district where land were monopolized by lineages. Therefore, it could be concluded that over 41.5% land in He village must be lineage property. Local archive, NCX19510215, "'Xingxian' tugai gongzuo chubu zongjie" [The summary of land reform in "Xin" county, "兴县" 土改工作初步总结], "Xingxian" xianwei, 1951/02/15. Local archive, NCQ19510123, "'Baqu' tugai gongzuo zongjie baogao" [The report on land reform in "Ba" district, "坝区" 土改工作总结报告], "Baqu" quweu, 1951/01/23.

⁹⁰ According to the data in Ba district, excluding the land owned by lineages and a few landlords, there was about 0.51 *mu* (less than 0.2 acre) per person. Because the land monopoly by lineages was most tense in He village, the average land under each person's name should not be over the average of the district. Local archive, NCX19530808, "'Xingxian' tujan tudi shuju tongji" [The data on land during the reform in "Xing" county, "兴县" 土改土地数据统计], "Xingxian" xianwei, 1953/08/08. Local archive, NC19510123, "Baqu tugai gongzuo zongjie baogao"

⁹¹ From interview, NC200603033HSC.

shows the different meanings of land according to the residents in the villages.

Table 2: Land ownership and the symbolic meanings of land by villages, before the communist land reform

<u>Village Name</u>	<u>average land owned by villagers</u> * (acre/person) ⁹²	<u>the majority of land (owned by)</u>	<u>the symbolic meaning of land</u>
Xigou	<0.1	the Ma landlord family	properties of rich Ma landlords
Beiwan	0.7	the majority of villagers	properties of common peasants
Nancun	0.2	lineages and lineage branches	properties of lineage members

* only including the small landholders who were labeled as middle peasants, poor peasants, and the hired labors

Based on the data from the three villages in this project, it shows that land tenure patterns varied over China before the communist takeover. There also existed different social arrangements in accordance with these variations. However, underneath these variations, there was a common problem in each village: in general, the rural residents did not own enough land to feed their families. The call on equal distribution of land by persons (*juntianzhi*) had been a continuous effort among Chinese intellectuals, and it also characterized the blueprint of the Taiping revolt in the late imperial period.⁹³

⁹² The average land owned by villagers was calculated based on the data included by the communists as a part of their summary reports of land reform.

⁹³ Such calls could be traced back to Mencius' saying that "people own real property" [min you hengchang, 民有恒产]. In the thousands of years after Mencius, there were always some leading persons advocating such ideas in each dynasty, such as Dong Zhongshu (179-104 B. C.), Zhu Xi (1130-1200), and Wang Fuzhi (1619-1692). Zhao Gang and Chen Zhongyi, 1982, *Zhongguo tudi zhidushi* [The history of land tenure in China, 中国土地制度史]. Taipei: Lianjing chuban shiye gongsi, pp. 25-51. Moreover, land was always the focus of the peasant revolts. The ideas about land equality could be seen in the rebels' slogans, and finally the Taiping rebels (1851-1864) brought out a written document, *tianchao tianmu zhidu* [天朝田亩制度], which underlined the equal right over land for every one. Guo Dehong, 1993, *Zhongguo*

In order to build up the republic, the nationalists paid special attention to the land problem since the beginning. In his fight against the Qing emperors, the founder of Chinese nationalist party, Sun Yat-sen, addressed land equality (*pingjun diquan*) as the core of his principles. Later on, Sun advanced such an idea to a famous slogan, “land to the tiller.”⁹⁴ After the nationalists gained control over the majority of Chinese territory since the late 1920s, Sun’s followers formulated their land regulations by proposing rent-deduction and even land purchase by the state.⁹⁵

When the nationalists struggled to make a way from south China to the north in the late 1920s, the 25% rent-reduction project was proposed.⁹⁶ However, the nationalist admitted themselves that their policies did not work very well. Zhejiang, a Southeastern province, was the only province that continued the rent-reduction project after the nationalists achieved their nominal control over China. Even in this model province, the project “were only carried out at the county level, while the prefecture and village levels were almost untouched.”⁹⁷ Only the villages close to county sites benefited from this

jinxindai nongmin tudi wenti yanjiu [Studies on land problem in China since 1840s, 中国近现代农民土地问题研究]. Qingdao: qingdao chubanshe, pp.189-195.

⁹⁴ Early in 1903, Sun Yat-sen wrote down “land equality” into the oath for his followers. And then he stated it as the core of his principle for people’s welfare (*minsheng*, 民生) in the early 1910s. The slogan “land to the tiller” was firstly addressed in a speech Sun made in 1924. Guo Dehong, 1993, *Zhongguo jinxindai nongmin tudi wenti yanjiu*, pp.199-228.

⁹⁵ The nationalists started their rent-deduction project since the early 1920s during the Canton and Wuhan periods. In 1930, the nationalist government promulgated the land law which reinstated Sun’s principle. Cheng Hanchan, 1994, *Ershi shiji qianbanqi zhongguo tudi zhidu yu tudi gaige* [The land tenure and reform in China, 1900-1950, 20 世纪前半期中国土地制度与土地改革]. Beijing: Zhongguo dang’an chubanshe, pp. 241-286.

⁹⁶ Cheng Hanchan, 1994, *Ershi shiji qianbanqi zhongguo tudi zhidu yu tudi gaige*, pp.252-255.

⁹⁷ Zheng Kangmo, 1977, “Zhejiang erwu jianzu zhi yanjiu” [Research on the 25% rent-reduction in Zhejiang, 浙江二五减租之研究], in Xiao Zheng (ed.), *Minguo ershi niandai zhguo dalu tudi wenti ziliao*, 民国二十年代中国大陆土地问题资料]. Vol. 65. Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, p. 33972.

policy, while the majority of agricultural population was excluded.

During the resistance war, the nationalist rural policies were hardly advanced. The war pressure forced nationalists, as well as their rivals—the Japanese and the communists—to give up any efforts which might disturb the constant and steady supply from rural area. The nationalists shifted to more moderate policies. The rent was proposed to set fixed several times, and land purchases by the big landholders were restricted in many ways.⁹⁸ Yet these policies were brought into effect in limited areas, which might be partially due to the inefficiency of the nationalist administration.

Such bureaucratic problem continued to trouble the nationalists after they successfully defeated Japanese. While witnessing the communists taking advantage from the land redistribution projects, the nationalists also recognized the necessity to encourage some changes in rural area. An agrarian reform was drafted in 1948, five months after the communists released similar regulations in their bases. However, the administration failed to put anything in work before their full defeat.⁹⁹ As the leftist scholars criticized at that time, such policies were mainly slogans to blare at rural people, and were only implemented in limited areas in limited time.¹⁰⁰

Nancun was in the region steadily controlled by the nationalists during the nationalists fight with all kinds of rivals in 1912-1949. No significant changes in land

⁹⁸ The ambitions of the nationalists could be found in a wartime regulation on land policies [tudizhengce zhanshi shishi gangyao, 土地政策战时实施纲要] which was put forward in 1941. Jin Dequn. 1994. “Kangzhan shiqi guomindang de tudi zhengce,” in Jin Dequn, *Min'guo shiqi nongcun tudi wenti* [Land problem in the republic period, 民国时期农村土地问题]. Beijing: Hongqi chubanshe, pp.148-172.

⁹⁹ Wan Guoding, 1948, “Tudi wenti yu guanliao zhengzhi”.

¹⁰⁰ Xiao Zheng. 1980. *Tudi gaige wushi nian* [Fifty years in land reform, 土地改革五十年]. Taipei: zhongguo dizheng yanjiusuo, pp72-73.

tenure could be found either in the official archives or in oral testimonies from the villagers. “Did the nationalists ever try to change land tenure? No, I do not think so,” said He Shengtang, a well-educated 90-year old villager of Nancun, who believed the nationalists did not care about land problem at all. “The lineage managers were still the most powerful people in the village like their forefathers.”¹⁰¹ It seemed that the nationalists did not really try to apply their idea on land equality to Nancun. The reluctance of the nationalists reveals that they did not want to alter economic and sociopolitical relationship in the villages.

The nationalists’ attitudes toward rural problems were shared by the Japanese during their invasion into China from 1931 to 1945. Like the nationalists, in order to provide enough supplies for the war, the Japanese could not afford any risk by initiating the land redistribution projects in rural areas. As a matter of fact, the Japanese chose to build northeast China as their steady colony in the war time.¹⁰² Therefore, after they took over Beiwan and its surrounding areas in 1932, they did not in any way attempt to solve land problem there. Instead, a series of policies aiming to absorb more resources were carried out. By early 1939, the Japanese county government had monopolized purchase and trade of all agriculture products.¹⁰³

Moreover, in order to allocate Japanese migrant farmers, the Japanese also purchased a large amount of land in a village north to Beiwan, which exacerbated land

¹⁰¹ From interview, NC200604021HST.

¹⁰² Zhongyang dang’an ju. 2000, *Wei Manzhouguo de tongzhi yuneimu* [The governance of Manchukuo, 伪满洲国的统治与内幕]. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju.

¹⁰³ *Suixian xianzhi*, p.15.

problem in this area.¹⁰⁴ By 1941, over 50 Japanese households had moved into the county region and seized about 2000 *mu* (about 670 acres) land from local peasants.¹⁰⁵ Fortunately, because Beiwan was almost on the border of the Japanese controlled areas, no Japanese farmer came. “The closest Japanese immigrants must be 80 *li* (about 26miles) to the north.” As a former enlisted labor worker of Japanese, Yang Zhengxin knows a lot about the Japanese residents around. “And they were also forced to sell the crops to the county like our fellow villagers.”¹⁰⁶ As one of the political rivals fighting over Chinese territories in the 1930s and 1940s, the Japanese launched a few projects, such as the compulsory purchase of grains and other farm products, to strength their control of villages like Beiwan. However, the call on land redistribution, which might lead to essential changes in rural China, might be the last project for the Japanese, as well as for the nationalists.

In contrast to the Japanese and the nationalists, the communists showed their enthusiasm in land problem in the countryside. In its early years the communist party did not declare any land redistribution project.¹⁰⁷ However, since the mid-1920s, the rural problem had been raised as a vital problem of the Chinese society by the communists, and the rent-reduction campaigns had been advocated in a few places. In order to end

¹⁰⁴ Jin Dequn, 1994, “Ribei diguo zhuyi dui zhongguo dongbei de yimin yu tudi qinduo”, pp. 85-110 in *Min’guo shiqi nongcun tudi wenti*.

¹⁰⁵ Local archive, BWX19800715, “Manzhou shiqi ribenren zai suixian qingkuang” [Japanese in Sui county during the Manchukuo period, 满洲时期日本人在绥县情况], Suixian dang’anke, 1980/07/15.

¹⁰⁶ From interview, BW200607252YZX.

¹⁰⁷ Land redistribution had been written in a 1923 directive from the Communist International to Chinese communist party. However, Chinese communists never mentioned such land reform in their documents, while rent-reduction and interest-reduction had been advocated. See Guo Dehong. 1993. *Zhongguo jinxiandai nongmin tudi wenti yanjiu*, pp. 290-294.

separatist warlordism in China, the communists formed an alliance with the nationalists in 1924. It was during this collaborative period that Sun Yat-sen, the founding father of the nationalists, reiterated his principle of land equality and brought out the idea of “land to the tiller.”¹⁰⁸ The communists worked closely with the nationalists in carrying out rent-reduction campaigns, which were spread over sixteen provinces.¹⁰⁹ Both Nancun and Xigou located in these provinces, but neither of the two villages was directly influenced by rent-reduction.

After the alliance between the nationalists and the communists was broken in the late 1920s, while the nationalists turned Sun Yat-sen’s land equality into a mere principle in written documents, the communists set out their long march in solving land problems. Right after the split, the communists for the first time declared that land revolution was “the central problem of the Chinese revolution”.¹¹⁰ In the following ten years from 1927 to 1937, although the communists underwent brutal wars with the nationalists, the land redistribution projects were carried out in seventeen soviet bases that the communists set up.¹¹¹ All lands owned by landlords were confiscated and redistributed equally among other villagers; and the changes in land ownership had initiated a series of social and economic changes in rural China. The former big land owners lost their properties, and

¹⁰⁸ See Guo Dehong, 1993, *Zhongguo jinxiandai nongmin tudi wenti yanjiu*, p. 228.

¹⁰⁹ Renmin chubanshe (eds). 1953. *Diyici guonei geming zhanzheng shiqi de nongmin yundong* [The peasant movements during the first civil war, 第一次国内革命战争时期的农民运动]. Beijing: Renmin chubanshe: pp. 17-19.

¹¹⁰ In 1927, this proclamation was made in the August 7 resolution, the countermeasure of the communists facing the purge. See Jin Dequn, 1994, “Cong Jingganshan dao zhongyang geming genjudi tudi geming douzheng shilue”, in *Minguo shiqi nongcun tudi wenti*, pp. 218-263.

¹¹¹ According to Jin Dequn, such project started at Jingganshan base area in November 1927. In 1930, the land redistribution project reached its peak when two separated bases were expanded and finally united into a big central base. Jin Dequn, 1994, “Cong Jingganshan dao zhongyang geming genjudi tudi geming douzheng shilue.” In *Minguo shiqi nongcun tudi wenti*, pp. 218-263.

some were even executed. At the same time, the village poor were allocated a plot, and then were organized into different kinds of associations at the village level. Later on, when the development of Chinese communism was divided into different periods, the ten years from 1927 to 1937 was labeled as the land revolution (*tudi geming*) period, indicating the significant changes as results of the land redistribution policies.¹¹²

In the land revolution period, the Chinese communists for the first time proclaimed a fight against the exploitation imposed on the landless peasants by land owners. The long existing social orders in village life were challenged, and even the areas that were not controlled by the communists were drawn into the turbulence. None of the three villages of this research was within the Soviet bases, but Nancun and Xigou were close to some communist controlled areas.

The communist central base (*zhongyang genju di*) located less than 100 miles away from Nancun, and the communist guerilla was active in the neighboring counties. The Nancun villagers heard about the land redistribution in the communist bases, and they tried their best to understand the communist project. At that time, He Shengtang was a student of the normal school. “I came back to the village for the Chinese new year. Several uncles and cousins asked me the differences between the communists and the chivalrous bandits who robbed the rich to help the poor.”¹¹³

In Nancun, the majority of land was owned by the clans, and every family member was granted the ownership at least nominally. Therefore, it seemed that the land

¹¹² See Mao Zedong, 1991, *Gongchandan ren fakanci* [The forward of the periodical *The Communists* 《共产党人》发刊词] (written on October 4, 1939). In *Mao Zedong xuanji* [Selective works of Mao Zedong 《毛泽东选集》], Vol. 2. Beijing: Renmin chubanshe: pp. 605~613.

¹¹³ From interview, NC200604033HST.

redistribution in the communist bases did not disturb Nancun villagers too much. The affluent Ma landlord family in Xigou was not so lucky. In 1934-35, the land redistribution projects were carried out in the communist guerrilla areas close to Xigou, and the landlords hired a company of the nationalist soldiers stationed in the village to protect them.¹¹⁴ Under the directive of the nationalist troop, the village youth were organized as the village militia, and received some military training from the soldiers. Yang Zhuwang remembered that all villagers were forced to move into the fortress, which was constructed by the landlords in order to resist the Islamic rebellion in Qing dynasty. “We kids could only play within the fortress, but we were happy to watch the training and imitate our elder brothers.”¹¹⁵ After the Xigou villagers were confined in the fortress for over three months, the gates of the fortress were open again in the spring of 1935. The villagers must feel relieved like the Ma landlords. Although the villagers had to celebrate the Chinese New Year in the crowded fortress, Xigou was not under the direct threat of the communist land revolution, and the properties of the Ma landlords were still intact.

With the massive invasion of Japanese troops since 1937, Chinese communists gave up the land redistribution policies, in order to encourage the landowners to join the national united front against the invaders. The rent- interest reduction campaigns were re-launched in the communist bases. Against this backdrop, the Ma landlords of Xigou suffered from loss of their fortune. After Xigou was under the complete control of the communist in 1940, the Ma landlords lost a great amount of their incomes. On the one

¹¹⁴ Zhang Wentian, “Mixian Xigou diaocha”, pp. 145-146.

¹¹⁵ From interview, XG20000172YZW.

hand, their tenants were allowed to pay less than the regular rent.¹¹⁶ On the other hand, the establishment of peasant associations gave confidence to some of the Ma's tenants who paid even less than they were allowed.¹¹⁷ Meanwhile, due to the great amount of land the Ma landlords owned, the tax they had to pay was also a great amount. To some Ma landlords, the rents they collected were not even enough to cover the taxes they were asked to pay, and the Ma landlords had to sell some of their lands to the Xigou villagers.¹¹⁸ As a result, although the communists gave up their land redistribution project during the resistance war, some amount of land had been transferred from the big landholders to the village poor. At this point, a "silent revolution" had already taken place, and land inequality had been alleviated to some extent.¹¹⁹

Since the establishment of Chinese communist party, the policies concerning land played a vital part in rural agendas of the competing political powers. In order to promote the poor and then to reorganize the villages, the communists targeted at land concentration in rural areas. By advocating rent-reduction and land redistribution, the land policies of the communists clearly threatened the landowners, and endeavored to overturn the existing social orders of the villages. Therefore, when the competitors of the

¹¹⁶ During the war of resistance, the basic regulation of the communists was to cut off at least 25% of the rent (*erwu jianzu*). However, in some areas, the reduction rate was raised to over 50%. See Guo Dehong, *Zhongguo jinxiandai nongmin tudi wenti*, pp. 369-372. From local archive, XGD194007: "Suiqu" jianzu jianxi zanxing tiaoli [Regulations on rent and interest reduction in "Sui" subregion, "绥区" 减租减息暂行条例], "Suiqu" linshi canyihui, 1940/7.

¹¹⁷ The Ma landlords owned a great deal of land out of Xigou. With the support of the peasant association in their own villages, some tenants only agreed to pay 30% of the rent. From interview, XG200001163LCZ.

¹¹⁸ Local archive, XGX19460809, "Guanyu 'Xigou' de tudi wenti" [On the land of Xigou, 关于 "西沟" 的土地问题], Zhonggong Mixian Hequ quwei, 1946/8/9.

¹¹⁹ See Friedman, Edward, Paul G. Pickowicz, and Mark Selden. 1991. *Chinese Village, Socialist State*.

communists dealt with rural affairs, they had to make response to the communist agenda.

In the Japanese-controlled Beiwan, no special land policies were enforced. During their march to conquer China, the Japanese did not intend to initiate great social changes. Moreover, while the communists believed that land inequality was evil, the Japanese invaders obviously did not regard the land concentration in rural China as an obstacle in their way or even a problem at all. Otherwise, the Japanese definitely would have paid more attention to formulate their land policies, instead of ignoring the subject. Although the nationalists were rivals of the Japanese in battlefields during the resistance war, the nationalists also believed that land concentration was not a serious problem, just as the Japanese had perceived. As a result, the nationalists never endorsed land redistribution in rural China, even when they formed an alliance with the communists during the war against the Japanese invaders. The relatively moderate rent and interest reduction might have reached the limits of the nationalists. Even so, the nationalists were reluctant to launch the rent-reductions in their countryside. At least, in the nationalist-controlled Nancun, such campaign was never advocated as in the communist Xigou.

The different attitudes on land inequality from the competing political powers decided their various approaches to incorporate the village into their blueprint of a new state. While the other two were reluctant to deal with the land issue in the countryside, the communists treated land redistribution as the ground of their mission. The land politics was not only going to be the major topic of the communist efforts, but also the starting-point of the communists to launch a disciplinary revolution over China.

IV. Imperial China and the Modern State Projects

In the long history of Chinese empire, the imperial state tried to build up efficient control over the countryside, and the state imposed its authority and interest on local activities, such as the control of the irrigation system and the worship of the rain gods, through both institutional participation and cultural endorsement. However, these water-related activities in the three villages demonstrate that various village organizations contributed to manage local affairs at the grassroots. Direct involvements of the imperial state in the village were usually limited. In addition, although in Confucianism self-discipline was connected to the governance of a state, the disciplinary practices in the Chinese village was carried out mainly by families and lineages, instead of by the imperial bureaucracy. As a result, the imperial state did not achieve a thorough and direct control over the village, and had to balance local communities with great care.

The defeat by western invaders exposed the incompetence of the imperial state, which was partially a result of the loose connection between the imperial bureaucracy and the grassroots. The reform of the Qing court in its later period tried to penetrate the countryside through imposing the new taxation system and establishing new institutions to discipline villagers. The success of these efforts would contribute to the building-up of a Chinese modern state. This agenda was followed by later players who also tried to build up a modern state over the broad territories. In order to ground their power at the ground level, the Nationalists, the communists and the Japanese all launched projects similar to the reform of the Qing court. Through building up local administration and imposing tax collection, the three political powers aimed to establish closer connections with the rural area.

However, deliberate land policies distinguished the communists from their rivals.

To the Chinese people, the soil was not only essential to agricultural production, but also a symbol embodied with social and cultural meanings in village life. Different from the water-related activities which could tie different groups of villagers together, land tenure differentiated the villagers in terms of their land ownership. The series of projects carried out by the communists, such as rent-reduction and land redistribution, highlighted the different interests within the village. Through such differentiation, the communists would be able to replace the cooperative alliance within the village, and then seize village affairs in their hands. The modern state builders must have learned a lesson from the fall of the imperial state. The absence of disciplinary practices prevented the imperial state from building up direct and efficient control over local communities. Therefore, the communist land reform projects would launch a disciplinary revolution deliberately.

Chapter Three

Land Reform and Mistakes:

Land Reform in Xigou

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way.

----From *A Tale of Two Cities* ¹

Land is not merely the means for production, but also a symbol embodying specific social relations in a rural community. Land tenure actually provides a stage for the hierarchic groups in a village to demonstrate their domination or submission. In this respect, reforms targeting land tenure would lead to some essential social changes in rural communities. Through the deliberate adjustments on land policies, Chinese communists tasted the success of reorganizing rural society and building up power over their territories. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the land redistribution helped the communists to build up and defend soviet governments in various areas. During the anti-Japanese war, while suspending land allocation and promoting rent reduction, the

¹ Dickens, Charles. 1988. *A Tale of Two Cities*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, p.1.

communists attracted big land-holders as well as the village poor to join in their coalition government. Now, after the defeat of Japanese, the communists were going back to enforce the land distribution reform over their territories, which would result in the best of times for some and the worst of times for others.

With the gradual takeover, the communist land reform reached almost each corner of the vast China in 1946-52. In addition to the fact that they deliberately formulated their land rhetoric in different historical contexts before, Chinese communists also adjusted their policies during the spread of land reform. Once a policy had been carried out in the controlled areas, special attention was paid on the outcomes of the policy implementation, and the policies were amended for the later conquered areas. During the spread of land reform over China, the 1946 May-Fourth Directive, the 1948 Basic Agrarian Law, and the 1950 Agrarian Reform Law--these three successive directives marked some prominent changes of the reform guideline.

This chapter and the following two chapters will focus on the processes of land reform in three villages: Xigou, Beiwan, and Nancun. Chronologically, land reform projects were carried out in these three villages one after another. More importantly, the reforms in these villages were also guided by the three changed directives separately. Therefore, the line-up of these three villages could not only bring out a chronologic account of land reform over China, but also exemplify the differences of the three directives. Moreover, by shedding light on the detailed processes of land reform in each village, this project aims to reveal the interplay between policy-making and implementation. In this respect, the spread of land reform over China was not just a chronologic-geographic course, but also a process for the communists to adjust and

advance their techniques in dealing with the localities and disciplining the new state at different levels.

Among the three villages, Xigou (Western) was a long-time communist base, and the Xigou villagers witnessed the kick-off of the communist land reform. Located in the loess hills of the plateau seven hundred miles west from Beijing, Xigou was dominated by the affluent Ma landlord family before the advent of Chinese communists. The Ma landlords controlled almost every inch of the village land, and almost all of the other villagers were either tenants or servants of the landlord households.² In order to fight against the Japanese invaders together, the communists established the coalition with the nationalists. In 1937, with the agreement of the nationalists, Xigou was included in the garrison area of the communists. Three years later, the communists drove away the nationalist superintendent official in charge of the prefecture and finally incorporated Xigou into their base areas.³ Since then, various social and political reforms had been proclaimed in Xigou, and the communists gradually broke down the domination of the Ma landlord family.

Early in 1940, right after the take-over, the communists launched the rent and interest reduction campaign (*jianzu jianxi*) in Xigou. Now according to the policy, the tenants could claim a 25%-55% reduction in the rent.⁴ Actually some tenants of the Mas

² In the 1942 survey conducted by the communists, there were 273 households in Xigou, among which fifty-three were descents of the Ma landlord family. Except for four households, the other villages did not own enough land to feed themselves, and had to rent lands from the Ma landlords or work for them. Zhang Wentian, 1994, “‘Mixian’ ‘Xigou’ diaocha”, pp 135-144.

³ See Fang Chenxiang and Huang Zhao’an. 1990. *Shaan-Gan-Ning bianqu gemingshi* [History of the revolution in the Shaan-Gan-Ning border area, 陕甘宁边区革命史]. Xi’an: Shaanxi shifan daxu chubanshe. Renmin chubanshe (eds.), 1953b, *Kangri zhanzheng shiqi jiefangqu kaiguang* [The liberated-areas during the anti-Japanese War, 抗日战争时期解放区概况]. Beijing: Renmin chubanshe.

⁴ From local archive, XGD194007, “‘Sui fenqu’ jianzu jianxi zanxing tiaoli.

only agreed to pay 30 percent of the rent.⁵ The communist rent reduction policies, accompanied with heavy taxes (*aiguo gongliang*), severely weakened the economic power of the Ma landlords. The landlords had to sell some land to the Xigou villagers out of their family. At the same time, a people's political regime (*renmin zhengquan*) was gradually established over the region. Although the Ma landlords were still recruited to the joint government, the landlords had to share the power with their tenants and servants in Xigou.⁶ The peasant association had been established in Xigou, and endeavored to organize the villagers to confront the Ma landlords in the rent-reduction and other projects.⁷ Yet now, after the defeat of the Japanese invaders, the communists were going to call off the cooperation with the Ma landlords, and the land redistribution project would be launched in Xigou.

Land reform was a critical step for the communists. The following pages of this chapter will examine the concrete process of land reform in Xigou with the changing tones of the policies formulated by Chinese communists. On the one hand, the formulations of the policies will be focused on. What were the aims of the communist party when it initiated land reform? Which concerns of the communists encouraged or forced them to adjust and change the former policies? On the other hand, the implementation of the policies will be exemplified in the process of the land redistribution projects in Xigou. How did the communists enforce the reform down to

⁵ From interview, XG200001163LCZ.

⁶ Because of the national coalition endorsed by the communists, the Ma landlord family still played vital roles in the government system in the communist border region. A member of the Ma landlord family was elected as the head of the district which directly supervised Xigou. And there were three Mas from Xigou (Ma Tuitang, Ma Yingmin, and Ma Zuzhang) in the congress of the border region. Local Archive, XGX194111, "Shaan-Gan-Ning bianqu di'er jie canyihui yiyuan minglu".

⁷ From interviews, XG200001041LZY and XG200001163LSZ.

the village? What did the villagers think about the ambitions of the communist project? How did the reactions of the villagers influence both the formulations and the implementations of the land reform policies?

The examination of land reform in Xigou will be conducted at three levels: the central committee as the policy makers, the Xigou villagers as the targeted group of the reform, and the local party cadres who functioned as intermediate executive. The interactions between these three levels would hopefully bring out a somewhat complete picture of the land redistribution project, which will then contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the ultimate goals of the communists in launching the reform.

I. Xigou and the May Fourth Directive

1. The dispirited villagers and a reform “must-to-do”

At the time of the resistance war in 1937-1945, the landholders in the communist bases, such as the Ma landlord group in Xigou, were incorporated into the united front with the communists, and their land ownership was not threatened directly.⁸ After the Japanese were defeated and driven out of China in the summer of 1945, the united front against a common foreign invader among different political groups was on the verge of being broken into pieces anytime. In the following year, on the one hand, the nationalists, communists, and the third parties held meetings and worked on negotiations continuously; on the other hand, the sporadic battles between the communist armies and

⁸ In the summer of 1936, even before the united front was formed, the communist party directives started to moderate the land policies in their bases. Furthermore, by 1940, the communists announced a Three-Thirds political system (*sansan zhi*) in their controlled areas. One-third of the seats were reserved for middling elements, and many landholders were admitted into the collaborative governments. Against a background of such political collaboration, the land allocation project was completely suspended during the resistance war. See Selden, Mark. 1971, *The Yen-an way in Revolutionary China*, pp.99-161.

the nationalist forces occurred frequently. Different political groups were cooperating and fighting at the same time, and the future of China was not clear to either the battling rivals or the bystanders.

The Xigou villagers also sensed the uneasiness at that time. Although the communists had taken over the area for over five years, the communists were not yet the dominant force in Xigou. At the economic level, the Ma landlord family still owned most of the lands around the neighboring area. At the political level, some Ma landlords still held positions in district and county government, while the peasant association and party branch still strived to acquire more supporters in the village.⁹

Moreover, after the conclusion of the resistance war, the Ma landlords dreamed to restore their comfortable life style in the pre-war period. A 1946 report from the party branch of He district recorded the dreams of the Ma landlords. “The landlord class is pleased at the establishment of the national coalition government with the nationalists. In their view, it is not going to be a democratic reform of the nationalist governance; but the retreat of the border administration.” Based on the information from the newspapers about the agreement between the nationalists and communists, the Ma landlords were optimistic about their future. “A manager for a Ma landlord told other villagers, ‘our county will be under the rule of the nationalists, and the communists are leaving.’”¹⁰

The report writer believed that the aggressive words and the triumphant air of the Ma landlords scared the villagers. “Some peasants started to fawn on the landlords, and

⁹ From interview, XG199805261LZY.

¹⁰ Local archive, XGX19460809, “Guanyu ‘Xigou’ de tudi wenti”.

volunteered to do extra work for them; some are dispirited, and at a complete loss.”¹¹

This record revealed two basic focuses of the communists in rural area: the anti-revolutionary landlords and the unconscious mass. With such understandings of the rural situation, in spring 1946 the central committee released a directive, the May Fourth Directive, to launch their land redistribution project.¹² Therefore, the primary targeting object of land reform was local people in the villages. In this respect, land reform was not only an economic project, but also a political campaign of the communists to educate and train local communities.

The focus on local people instead of land could be detected from the rhetoric of the 1946 May Fourth Directive, which indicates the kickoff of the communist land reform.¹³ At the very beginning of this document, the central committee pictured the splendid mass movement in the liberated areas: “the mass took land directly from the hands of the landlords and enthusiasm is running very high.” The directive also described the oppositions from “traitors, bad gentry, evil tyrants, landlords”, “middle-of-

¹¹ Local archive, XGX19460809, “Guanyu ‘Xigou’ de tudi wenti”

¹² See “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu qingsuan jianzu ji tudi wenti de zhishi” [The Directive on Settling Accounts, Rent Reduction, and Land, 中共中央关于清算减租及土地问题的指示], 1946/5/4, drafted by Liu Shaoqi [刘少奇]. Zhongyang dang’anguan [中央档案馆] (ed.), 1981, *Jiefang zhanzheng shiqi tudi gaige wenjian xuanbian (1945-1949)* [The Selective of the documents on Land Reform during the War of Liberation, 解放战争时期土地改革文件选编 (一九四五——一九四九年)]. Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, pp.1-6. The English translation of this directive can be found in Selden, Mark and Patti Eggleston (eds.). 1979, *The People’s Republic of China: a Documentary History of Revolutionary Change*. New York: Monthly Review Press, pp.208-214.

¹³ The release of the May Fourth Directive in 1946 indicated a shift away from the policy of rent-reduction back to land reform. According to Suzanne Pepper, some intra-party directives reflected that the communists “had been moving ‘to the left’” some time prior to the release of the May Fourth Directives. Pepper argues that The May Fourth Directive was the formalization of a policy which had been developing in practice for a long time. Therefore, the shift back to land reform was not a great surprise. The new directive indicated the transformation had been taking place through the communist rent-reduction policies, while pointing out the way for the further transformation. Pepper, Suzanne. 1978. *Civil War in China: the political struggle, 1945-1949*, pp.244-246.

the-roaders”, and even “a few within the party.” Thus, land reform was primarily described as a battle between the mass and their opponents, especially the landlords. Following the description of the struggle, the directive proclaimed, “our communists must (*budebu*) firmly support the direct action of the broad masses in carrying out land reform.” By using the phrase “*budebu*”, the central committee made it clear that the communist party should not refuse to support “the just ideas and righteous actions” of the peasants.¹⁴

Different from the pessimism of Xigou villagers in the local report, the peasantry was portrayed as the revolutionary forces in the May Fourth Directive. It would be interesting but hard to tell which report represented the actual inclinations of the peasants in the communist base areas.¹⁵ Anyway, in the name of poor peasants, the communists launched land reform within their bases—the liberated areas in the communist term. The May Fourth Directive asserted that “the solution of the land problem in the liberated areas is now our most fundamental historical task”.¹⁶ “Land to the tiller”, which was one of the three-principles of the founding father of the nationalists, Sun Yet-san, was announced as the principle of this communist land reform: the peasants should obtain land from the landlords’ hands.¹⁷

¹⁴ Zhongyang dang’anguan, 1981, “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu qingsuan jianzu ji tudi wenti de zhishi” (1946/5/4).

¹⁵ Philip Huang points out that there existed the divergence between representational reality in the party’s at the macrosocietal level, such disjunctions were overlooked. Huang, Philip. 1995. “Rural Class struggle in the Chinese Revolution: Representational and Objective Realities from the Land Reform to the Cultural Revolution.”

¹⁶ Zhongyang dang’anguan, 1981, “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu qingsuan jianzu ji tudi wenti de zhishi” (1946/5/4).

¹⁷ “Land to the tiller” [*gengzhe you qi tian*, 耕者有其田] was adopted by Sun Yat-sen to emphasize the importance of land equality. The communists reinstated this slogan to stress the importance of laborers in agricultural production, and then to proclaim their rights on land over the land-holders’. See Cheng

The release of the May Fourth Directive indicated that the land redistribution project was going to be triggered in rural China. However, land tenure was not the only concern of the communist land redistribution project. In the reform guidance formulated by the communists, the land reform was first and foremost portrayed as a battle of two groups of people—the landless peasants versus the big landholders. Therefore, the target of the communist land reform was not only land but also people. Starting from the land allocation, economic, social, and cultural changes would be initiated to transform villages profoundly, and the villagers, as well as the communist officials, would be brought into the trainings for the communists to build up a new state.

2. The enlightened landlords and the peaceful land reform

The May Fourth Directive of 1946 is the landmark to launch land reform in the communist base areas. However, the methods to solve the land problem—suggested in this revolutionary directive—were not very revolutionary. Instead of confiscation of the land of all landlords, which was adopted in the 1920-1930s land revolution period, the directive dealt various landlords with different treatments. Only the land owned by hardcore traitors would be confiscated by force. The livelihood of the enlightened landlords who cooperated with the communists during the resistance war was asked to be given proper consideration. As a result, the peasants could get lands from these landlords mainly through the voluntary sale or contribution from the enlightened group.

However, beneath the moderate veil, the May Fourth Directive endorsed the struggle against the landlords by emphasizing the method of “settling-accounts”

(*qingsuan*). Through “settling-accounts of rent and interest, of usurpation of land, of burdens and of other unjust exploitation”, the landlords would have to surrender their properties, such as clothes, furniture, and other housewares, as compensation to their tenants.¹⁸ The communists knew well that the redistribution of these properties would “arouse the enthusiasm of the mass.”¹⁹ In Xigou, while the land redistribution through the voluntary sale and contribution of the Ma landlords was relatively peaceful, the “settling-accounts” campaign agitated the village.

Due to their close connections with high level cadres of the communist party, the Ma landlords in Xigou got to know the new directions of land reform even earlier than the county officials.²⁰ “A Ma landlords heard about the land reform policy from the prefecture official, and ran back to inform other landlords. Thus, the Ma landlords sold out some plots one after another.”²¹ However, the Ma landlords, who were famed as the “enlightened gentry” during the resistance war, soon showed their abilities to comply with the new trend. In August 1946, after the Ma landlords were invited to a forum on voluntary contribution organized by the county government, the county government

¹⁸ Zhongyang dang’ anguan, 1981, “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu qingsuan jianzu ji tudi wenti de zhishi” (1946/5/4).

¹⁹ This claim in the May Fourth directive reveals that the communists believed that they could ground land reform at the grassroots. Scholars also pointed out that the conflicts and grievances existing in the villages facilitated the implementation of the communist policies in villages. See Madsen, Richard, 1984, *Morality and Power in A Chinese Village*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. In this respect, the representational reality in the land reform policies was not completely constructed, but reflected some aspects of the objective reality in village life. See Huang, Philip. 1995. “Rural Class struggle in the Chinese Revolution: Representational and Objective Realities from the Land Reform to the Cultural Revolution.”

²⁰ Quite a few members from the Ma landlord family worked in the county and district governments, and several daughters of the Mas were married to the high officials of the communist party. See Zhang Wentian, 1994, “‘Mixian’ ‘Xigou’ diaocha”, pp.128-135.

²¹ Local archive, XGX08091946, “Guanyu ‘Xigou’ de tudi wenti.”

received about three hundred acres of land voluntarily donated by the Mas.²² “I gave away 200 *mu* (about 35 acres), and then I was classified as the ‘enlightened landlord’.”²³

In 1997, Ma Zhiqi, the last alive Ma landlord of Xigou, still knew well that such donations provided shelters for his families at the beginning of land reform.

In the winter of 1946, after obtaining 700 acres of land through the landlords’ contribution, the county government received the instructions about forced sale from the border government. Each person in the Ma landlord family was allowed to keep 150% of the average land owned by the middle peasant. The land over the quota was forced to sell to the border government in exchange with some special bonds.²⁴ In Xigou, about 3,500 acres of lands were purchased by government bonds, while about 900 acres, only one-tenth of the land owned by the Ma landlord family in the 1942 survey, were still in 63 households of the Ma landlords.²⁵

²² Local archive, XGX19901001, “Jiefang zhanzheng shiqi ‘Mixian’ tudi gaige yundong” [Land Reform in Mi county during the liberation War, 解放战争时期“米县”土地改革运动], compiled by Mixian dangshi bangongshi [米县党史办公室] (1990/10/1).

²³ From the interview, XG199708201MZQ.

²⁴ See “Shaan-Gan-Ning bianqu zhenggou dizhu tudi tiaoli” [Regulations on the forced sale of land from landlords in Shaan-Gan-Ning Border Area, 陕甘宁边区征购地主土地条例], 1946/12/18, drafted by Li Dingming [李鼎铭]. Xibei wushengqu bianzhuang lingdao xiaozu and Zhongyang dang’anju (eds.), 1990a, *Shaan-Gan-Ning bianqu kangri minzhu genjudi (wenxian juan II)* [The democratic base area of Shaan-Gan-Ning border area (documents, II), 陕甘宁边区抗日民主根据地 (文献卷·下)]. Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi ziliao chubanshe.

²⁵ In Zhang Wentian’s 1942 survey, the land owned by the Ma landlords was 13,977.5 *shang* (about 7,000 acre). However, Zhang believed that this number was underestimated due to the deliberate concealment of the landlords (Zhang, 1994: 135). In a report on the forced sale in Xigou, it was believed that the Ma landlords owned 44,854 *mu* (about 7,500 acre) before the Rent-reduction movement. After the implementation of the rent-reduction policies and the newly-applied voluntary contribution, 41% of these lands (around 3,100 acre) were transferred to the peasants through the voluntary sale. Through the forced sale, 20,881 *mu* (around 3,500 acre) were redistributed. See local archive, XGX194702, “‘Mixian’ Xigou zhenggou dizhu tudi gongzuo baogao” (1947/2). These numbers are also recorded in a memoir written by Li Weihuan, the secretary-general of the border government. See Li, Weihuan, 1990, “Shaan-Gan-Ning bianqu zhengfu gongzuo huigu” [Memoir on Shaan-Gan-Ning border government, 陕甘宁边区政府工作回顾], in Xibei wushengqu bianzhuang lingdao xiaozu and Zhongyang dang’anju (eds.), 1990b, *Shaan-Gan-Ning bianqu kangri minzhu genjudi (huiyilu juan)* [The democratic base area of Shaan-Gan-Ning border

Both the voluntary contribution and the forced sale policy strictly followed the moderate tone set down in the May Fourth Directive. The tendency of a peaceful land reform in 1946-1947 was a situational decision of the communists, producing a historical result. On the one hand, the landlords in the base area were allies of the communists during the resistance war, and they still played vital roles in local governments. As for the Ma family, in 1946, three Ma offspring worked for the border government or the party's central committee, while quite a few had positions in prefecture or county governments.²⁶ Therefore, harsh struggles against the landlords were impossible at that time. On the other hand, when the May Fourth Directive was released, although the communists and the nationalists were on the verge of the war, the massive battles did not break out until a month later. Liu Shaoqi, the top leader of the communist party, was the central figure who took charge of formulating the land reform policies. In a review on the 1946 land reform, Liu Shaoqi admitted: "at that time, the whole nation asked for peace. If we stuck to the equal redistribution of land and the war broke out, people would say: 'it is because of your communists that the war broke out.'" Therefore, the May Fourth Directive was "a combined pursuit of peace and land reform."²⁷

Through voluntary contribution and forced sale, it seemed that the concentration of land in Xigou had been resolved. The Ma landlord households did not exercise land monopoly of Xigou; the former tenants of the Mas all got a plot in their own hands. In order to celebrate the completion of the forced sale, on March 7, 1947, a grand mass rally

area (memoirs), 陕甘宁边区抗日民主根据地（回忆录卷）]. Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi ziliao chubanshe, pp.1-102.

²⁶ From the interview, XG199708201MZQ.

²⁷ Liu Shaoqi, "Zai quanguo tudi huiyi shang de jielun" (1947/09/13), in Liu, Shaoqi, 1981, *Liu Shaoqi xuanji (shangjuan)* pp.384-395.

was held in Xigou, just outside the ancestor hall of the Ma landlord family. “More than two thousand peasants from seven neighboring districts attended this meeting. The peasants smashed the merit stone tablets of the Ma landlords, and erected a *Fanshen* monument.”²⁸ At that gathering, the peasants not only decided to observe the date as an annual festival but also wrote a letter to chairman Mao to express their thanks toward the communists who liberated them from the oppression of the landlords. The merit tablets which inscribed the glorious achievement of the Ma landlords and their contributions to the community had been smashed, and a new monument which symbolized the liberation of the peasants by the communists was going to be established. Such changes indicated that the dominance of the Mas in Xigou was gone forever and a new social order was under construction.

Obviously the land problem had been settled in Xigou. Now land, as the basic means of production, was not monopolized by any privileged group. The land concentration was not going to be the impediment of the rural development any more. Every villager owned a plot to secure their basic living. Moreover, a new monument replaced the stone tablets of the landlords, indicating that a new social order had been set on. In this respect, land reform in Xigou was quite successful. However, the communist land reform never only targeted for a relatively equal ownership of land. In the mind of Chinese communists, there were some pursuits far more important than the land allocation.

3. The unenlightened peasants and the incomplete “success”

²⁸ Li Weihai, 1990, “Shaan-Gan-Ning bianqu zhengfu gongzuo huigu”, p.95.

According to the public record from the communist officials, it seemed that land reform in Xigou was quite a success.²⁹ However, the members of the executive group in charge of the land redistribution in Xigou were not satisfied at the accomplishment. A county official who was the assistant of the executive chief clearly expressed his discontent in his account of the joyful mass celebration.³⁰ According to this official, beneath the enthusiastic faces of the mass at the celebration, the already-liberated villagers of Xigou were not as enlightened as they were expected to be.

During the forced sale, Xigou was selected as an experimental site for the entire base region. Therefore, a work team from the border government arrived at Xigou in February 1947. The May Fourth Directives emphasized the importance of mass line in carrying out the land redistribution projects. The central committee urged the party committee in each area that they “should go all out to mobilize and lead the mass”, and to “retain the support of over 90 percent of the village population.”³¹ Soon after stepping into Xigou, the head of the work team, Zhou Xing, found out that it was not easy to mobilize the village population to struggle against the Ma landlords. As the top official who took charge of the public security in the entire base region, Zhou Xing was ever-victorious in combating with the nationalist spies.³² But now Xigou villagers brought him some trouble, and Xigou became a hard bone to him.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Local archives, XGX19470725, “‘Mixian’ ‘Xigou’ qingsuan douzheng qianhou” [The settling-accounts in ‘Xigou’ village Mi county, “米县” “西沟” 清算斗争前后], written by Ma Huaguang, 1947/07/25.

³¹ Zhongyang dang’anguan, 1981, “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu qingsuan jianzu ji tudi wenti de zhishi” (1946/5/4).

³² See Hao Zaijin, 1999, “Teshu zhanxian, chuanqi rensheng” [A legend in the special war, 特殊战线, 传奇人生]. In *Gongming*, no. 9: pp 58-61.

Right before the enforcement of the forced sale policies, some Ma landlords sold out their lands at low prices to minimize their loss. The 1946 report from the district recorded the uneasy reaction of the Xigou villagers at that time. When a tenant bought a plot from his landlord, “his seventy-year old father cried grievingly for the landlords: ‘The masters are forced to sell good lands at such a price.’”³³ The official who wrote the report believed that this case revealed the devotion toward the Ma landlords of some Xigou villagers.

Six months after the time when the report were written, Zhou Xing and his work team came to Xigou. Most of the villagers had benefited from the requisitioned land purchase. However, Zhou Xing found out that the villagers were still reluctant to launch struggles against the landlords. After talking with many villagers in his first four days in Xigou, Zhou noticed that the villagers were not satisfied with the forced sale, but they did not condemn the Ma landlords at all. “Farm laborers and handicraftsmen only got less than 1 *shang* (0.5 acre) per person, and the plots are relatively lean and far away from the village. But some (e.g. middle peasants and several farm laborers) do not have a sober antipathy toward the landlords. They believe that the landlords are already poor, so the properties of the landlords should not be disturbed again.” Instead, another group was condemned by Xigou villagers. “The mass are critical at a few local cadres. Through the land redistribution project of last year, the cadres got fertile land, with bigger size than the average. The local cadres do not treat the mass very well, which cut themselves off from the mass. Therefore, some handicraftsmen insist that they would struggle against

³³ Local archive, XGX19460809, “Guanyu ‘Xigou’ de tudi wenti”.

the landlords only after the problem of corrupt cadres has been solved.”³⁴

Zhou Xing knew well that after the land allocation in 1946, local cadres, instead of land, became the sticking point in Xigou. In fact, the land redistribution was only part of the ultimate aims of the communist land reform. In the May Fourth Directives, the methods to solve the land problem composed a small portion. The main articles focused on different attitudes towards different social groups in rural area, which revealed the communist’s endeavors to reconstruct the social relations through land reform. May Fourth Directives clearly stated that, during the movement, special attention should be paid to the organization development, such as “to set up party organizations, to train and promote cadres.”³⁵ However, in Xigou, the cadres were targeted by the villagers as their foes, instead of the leaders of the village and the assistants of the work team in land reform.

Facing the threat of “struggling against the cadres prior to the landlords,” as an experienced communist, Zhou decided to hold meetings with different groups in accordance with their special characteristics. “The first step is to mobilize the cadres and party members, to help them get to know the new directives and new spirits. We should tell them that they made progress, and their supervisors should be responsible for the mistakes that were made. As for several cadres whose images are very bad among the mass, we should educate them to realize their shortcomings, and ask them to do self-criticism.” Zhou was very nice to the local leaders in Xigou. Instead of criticizing the

³⁴ Local archives, XGX194702, “Bianqu gongzuotuan ‘Xigou’ tuanzhang Zhouxing de xin” [A letter from Zhou Xing, the head of ‘Xigou’ work team from the Border government, 边区工作团“西沟”团长周兴的信], written by Zhou Xing (1947/02).

³⁵ Zhongyang dang’anguan, 1981, “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu qingsuan jianzu ji tudi wenti de zhishi” (1946/5/4). In Selden and Eggleston (eds.), 1979: 213.

local cadres, Zhou made great efforts to educate and convince other Xigou villagers. Zhou held “different mass meetings separately (such as peasant association group meetings, women association meetings, and so on).” In these meetings, Zhou promised that the reasonable requirements and other concerns of the Xigou villagers definitely should be addressed, but the primary task was to struggle against the landlords.³⁶ Zhou was surely familiar with the principles in the May Fourth Directive. As long as they could “retain support from 90 percent of village population” as the directive suggested, the communist would not “make adventurist errors.”³⁷

After the detailed work of the work team, the mass seemed to accept the plan to struggle against the Ma landlords. “After we talked to the individuals in view of their personal situations, the mass fostered enthusiasm for the struggle. They said that ‘only after the landlords are swept out, would the peasants be able to stand up.’”³⁸ In this report written by a county official about five months later, it seemed that the efforts of Zhou Xing and his comrades succeeded. Zhou Xing believed that the villagers were ready for the struggles against the Ma Landlords. Therefore, the work team started to set up the stage to celebrate the forced sale and to launch the settling accounts.

In the May Fourth Directives, the settling-accounts campaign by calculating unjust exploitations from the landlords in the past was listed as a method for the peasants to get lands. In Xigou, the forced sale had already forced the Ma landlords to give away most of their lands, and the average Ma landlord household owned about 5 *shang* (1.5

³⁶ Local archives, XGX194702, “Bianqu gongzuotuan ‘Xigou’ tuanzhang Zhouxing de xin.”

³⁷ Zhongyang dang’anguan, 1981, “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu qingsuan jianzu ji tudi wenti de zhishi” (1946/5/4). In Selden and Eggleston (eds.), 1979: 213-214.

³⁸ Local archives, XGX19470725, “‘Mixian’ ‘Xigou’ qingsuan douzheng qianhou.”

acre) land like a middle peasant. Xigou villagers were clear that “the settling-accounts campaign did not aim at the land, but other properties, such as clothes, furniture, gold, and other valuables in the hands of the Mas.”³⁹ The Xigou villagers should feel excited at bringing these kinds of stuff back home. However, such excitement almost ruined the multi-village celebration of the 1946 land reform, which was also the mass rally of the settling-accounts campaign.

The rally was scheduled on March 7, 1947, and the day before the rally, the Xigou villagers finally figured out that some neighboring villages were also eligible to claim the fruits of the settling-accounts campaign. “The enthusiasm of the Xigou villagers died away.” On the day before the multi-village rally, the Xigou villagers decided to protect their fruits. “Many peasants broke into the landlords’ houses and took the valuables back to their home. They even organized sentry posts to prevent the intervention from the work team.”⁴⁰ Even fifty years later, a leading actor of the revolutionary robberies was still proud at their “revolution” activities.⁴¹

Mobilized by the work team, the Xigou villagers did rise up to conduct “revolution”. However, instead of following the guidance from the work team, the village revolutionaries pursued their own interests. The work team must have felt annoyed at these self-motivated revolutionaries in Xigou. Moreover, after taking the valuables from the landlords, the Xigou villagers decided to sabotage the multi-village rally on the next day. “The villagers said, ‘we chop a tree, but others are going to get

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ From the interview, XG199708223MYJ.

firewood.’’ It would have been a big strike at the communist authority and a bad model for the neighboring area, if the Xigou villagers did not attend the multi-village rally to be held in their village. The work team members had to visit the Xigou villagers again house by house, and persuade them to attend the rally. ‘‘After we explained the situation to them again and again, the Xigou villagers showed up in the rally reluctantly, and were very inactive in struggling against the Ma landlords.’’⁴²

A high official recorded the multi-village rally on March 7, 1947, in his memoir.⁴³ In his view, the rally was a mark of the success of land reform in Xigou. However, to evaluate land reform in Xigou by then was not easy. The land redistribution project in Xigou was successful in some way: the lands were not monopolized by the Ma landlords now; for the first time all villagers owned a plot of land. At the same time, the settling-accounts campaign can hardly be seen as a complete triumph of the communists: the peasants, who sided with the landlords before the reform, were still unawakened; they did not follow the party’s agenda, and almost ruined the official celebration on land reform.

The March 7 multi-village rally was an important moment of the land reform project in Xigou. The liberation monument had been erected, but under the shadow of this revolution monument, the communists still struggled to gain the complete consent from the peasants. While celebrating the ‘‘success’’ of the land redistribution, the rally also launched a new project: the settling-accounts campaign. The peasants would settle the exploitations for generations and struggle against the landlord face to face. However, instead of gaining the mass for the communists, settling account became the catalyst

⁴² Local archives, XGX19470725, ‘‘‘Mixian’ ‘Xigou’ qingsuan douzheng qianhou.’’

⁴³ Li Weihang, 1990, ‘‘Shaan-Gan-Ning bianqu zhengfu gongzuo huigu.’’

which led to the outburst of the conflicts between the Xigou villagers and the communists. The turbulence that happened in Xigou in the following few months was going to show that the completed land allocation was actually only a tiny part of land reform.

4. To educate the mass and to struggle against the cadres

When Zhou Xing and his work team plunged into the movement in Xigou, the nationalist troop were marching toward the communist base area. Many members of the Xigou work team were the backbones of the border government. As the head of public security department of the border government, Zhou Xing had to leave Xigou. “In the rally, Zhou told us that we had a big troop. He was in charge of the land reform here, but he had to go to the frontline.”⁴⁴ Ma Shenyin remembered Zhou’s presence at the rally vividly. Zhou Xing might feel regret at the behaviors of the Xigou villagers in the rally. Anyway, the settling-account campaign had already launched, and the “unconscious” villagers were going to receive more edification.

In the rally on March 7, a joint group was elected to take charge of the settling-accounts campaign in Xigou. The 49 committeemen were drawn from the former tenants of the Ma landlords in six districts, and 11 were representatives of Xigou. The campaign to settle accounts asked the landlords to repay “the overcharged rent and interest, the usurpation of land, the burdens, and other unjust exploitation.” Three tasks needed to be completed by the joint committee. Firstly, they needed to calculate the amount of the exploitations the Ma landlords imposed on the tenants. Secondly, because the Ma

⁴⁴ From the interview, XG199708212MSY.

landlords had lost most of their lands through the forced sale, their other properties would be expropriated. Thirdly, these confiscated possessions, which were called the fruits of struggle, should be distributed among the tenants according to the exploitations over them.

Of course, the work of the committee was not easy. “The committee was divided into eight groups, according to the members’ education background, party membership, and their localities. It was to prevent corruption.” Ma Huaguang, the county official who supervised the settling-accounts campaign in Xigou, was confident at the impartiality of the joint committee. “We set down rules for all committee members: 1. Do not make compromise with the landlords; 2. Do not take a penny from the landlords as your own.”⁴⁵ The committee members were completely occupied by their work. As one of the committeemen recalled, “At that time, we could not go back to our own home. All committee members lived together and ate together. In order to enlist the confiscated stuff, I stayed up for several days.”⁴⁶

It took the committee about two weeks to enlist the confiscated. During this period, the committee also decided to confiscate the valuables which were taken from the Ma landlords by the self-motivated Xigou villagers on the night before the rally. Therefore, they had to enlighten the “unawakened” villagers of Xigou. “We held all kinds of meeting to persuade and educate the villagers, and asked them to give back the items they took from the Ma landlords. But we received very few.” Ma Huaguang tried his best to bring the villagers around. “We explained that politically their action on that

⁴⁵ Local archives, XGX19470725, “‘Mixian’ ‘Xigou’ qingsuan douzheng qianhou.”

⁴⁶ From the interview, XG200001122LZY.

night was revolutionary, but economically it was egoistical and illegal.” Ma realized that class consciousness should be fostered in Xigou. He told the villagers, “All poor peasants should stand together against the landlords. The landlord class is our enemy.”⁴⁷ Ma Huaguang’s accounts recorded the communists’ efforts to moderate emerging understandings of legitimate actions in land reform. To fight against the landlords was encouraged, but it should not follow the villagers’ own interests, but the class interests defined by the communists. At this point,

However, these efforts barely yielded visible results. The local officials must feel angry at the ignorance of Xigou villagers, and then they rummaged several villagers’ houses, which aroused the discontentment of the Xigou residents. “The officials should settle accounts with the landlords, but they were zealous at settling accounts with the peasants.” Nowadays some villagers still felt bitter.⁴⁸ “Although we found some stuff from several searches, the mass were critical of us. The village was on edge, and we had to stop the rummage.”⁴⁹

As Ma Huaguang admitted, the efforts to educate the Xigou villagers failed: “The villagers and the settling-accounts committee became opposite.”⁵⁰ Therefore, it was not odd that the Xigou villagers kept close watch on the movements of the committees. A special militia group, *Jinggan dui*, was organized by the village government to ensure the security during the settling account campaign. “Our job was to prevent the landlords

⁴⁷ Local archives, XGX19470725, “‘Mixian’ ‘Xigou’ qingsuan douzheng qianhou.”

⁴⁸ From the interview, XG199805153MYJ.

⁴⁹ Local archives, XGX19470725, “‘Mixian’ ‘Xigou’ qingsuan douzheng qianhou.”

⁵⁰ Local archives, XGX19470719, “Guanyu ‘Xigou’ qingli qunzhong douzheng guoshi zhong ganbu tanwu wentibaogao” [Report on the corrupt cadre in the settling accounts movement at ‘Xigou’, 关于“西沟”清理群众斗争果实中干部贪污问题报告], written by Qin Shan and Shi Rushan (1947/07/19).

from moving their valuables out of the village or the villagers stealing the confiscated properties.” The head of the special militia knew well about their mission. “We did not catch any landlords, but quite a few committee members who were in charge of the campaign.”⁵¹

Far before land reform, a journalist had already voiced his surprise at the luxurious life of the Ma landlords.⁵² The committee members, most of whom were from poor or middle peasant families, might have never seen so many valuables in their hands. The confiscated items from the landlords turned into fatal temptations for the committee members.

“I did not have a coat at that time, and there were some among the confiscated. One district official told me to write a note and lent me one.” The committee member, Liu Zhengyun, did not know such loan would cause him big trouble. When the Xigou villagers saw the committee members wearing the “borrowed” clothes, they must feel outraged. The committee declared it was illegal for the villagers to snatch the valuables from the landlords, but now the valuables were taken by the committee members publicly. “The villagers set sentry posts to scout the committee.” Ma Huaguang witnessed the accumulation of the villagers’ enmity toward the campaign committee.⁵³

The date for a second rally had been set on May 14, 1947. Again in Xigou the mass from the seven districts were to gather to celebrate the success of the settling-accounts campaign, and then get the portions of fruits under their names. At the same

⁵¹ From the interview, XG200001121YZW.

⁵² Guan Shan, 1935, “Shaan-bei (‘Xigou’ Majia) Da Dizhu.”

⁵³ Local archives, XGX19470719, “Guanyu ‘Xigou’ qingli qunzhong douzheng guoshi zhong ganbu tanwu wenti baogao.”

time, the discontent and enmity of the Xigou villagers toward the campaign soon reached the boiling point. Again, the day before the meeting, misfortune happened. “At that day, we caught two committeemen who sneaked the expropriated valuables and tried to transfer the items back to their home.” The militia head was proud at their achievement. The news spread over Xigou quickly, and the Xigou villagers soon confined all the committee members, and prepared to search their living places. As the supervisor of the campaign, Ma Huaguang thought the villagers’ actions were unacceptable, and ordered the villagers to remove the sentry posts. “The public posts were withdrawn, but the secret posts were kept. The villagers were in furies.” If Ma Huaguang could forecast what was going to happen the next day, he might have sought to pacify the villagers.

“In the next morning, the Xigou villagers guarded every road toward the meeting place. They exaggerated the corruption, and aroused the mass from other villages.” Therefore, the rally turned out to be a disaster. Four committee members were identified as corrupt, and were beaten badly. “Several committee members were hanged and beaten, and they were beaten until they cried. It was very bloody.” Guo Zhengming was stunned by the bloodshedding in the celebration.⁵⁴

Ironically, the May 14 rally to settle accounts with the landlords turned out to be the settling-accounts with the settling-account committee. The multi-village rally was completely out of the control of the local officials. Some villagers even tried to tie up Ma Huaguang, the supervisor of the campaign from county government. Although he was soon released, neither Ma Huaguang nor other county or district officials stood up to stop

⁵⁴ From the interview, XG199708211GZM.

the villagers' struggle against the corrupt committee members.⁵⁵

The work team from the border government left Xigou with the settling-accounts campaign incomplete, due to the attacks from the nationalists on the border area. There was another work team from the border government presiding land reform in a neighboring village. The team did not leave until the settling-accounts campaign was completed. The work team wrote down their suggestions on the settling accounts: "At the economic aspect of the settling-accounts campaign, the lands and houses of the landlords should be forced to sell out, and their properties should be used to repay the mass. At the political aspect, we should uncompromisingly blow out the landlords' arrogance."⁵⁶ However, the reserved target of the Xigou campaign, the Ma landlords, was completely forgotten by both the communist officials and the peasants. The landlords were absent from both the official records and the villagers' memories on this meeting.

The May Fourth Directive reiterated the importance of mass line in carrying out land reform: "In the struggle, we should completely follow the mass-line, mobilize the mass to solve the land problem by themselves. The anti-mass line through commandism, doing the work for the peasant, or giving them as a favor, should be prohibited absolutely."⁵⁷ However, in Xigou, the spontaneous revolution activities of the villagers again brought out a great trouble for the local executives of the land reform policies.

⁵⁵ Local archives, XGX19470719, "Guanyu 'Xigou' qingli qunzhong douzheng guoshi zhong ganbu tanwu wenti baogao."

⁵⁶ Local archives, XGX194703, "Guanyu qinsuan douzhen zhong de chubu yijian" [Suggestions on the settling-accounts campaign, 关于清算斗争的初步意见], written by Shan-Gan-Ning bianqu Guanzhuang gongzuotuan (1947/03).

⁵⁷ Zhongyang dang' anguan, 1981, "Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu qingsuan jianzu ji tudi wenti de zhishi" (1946/5/4).

The chaos of the May 14 multi-village meeting did not stop until a head of the party's country committee got to know the emergency and rushed to Xigou in the late afternoon. This official had to make two promises in order to dismiss the angry peasants of seven districts gathering in Xigou: "First, the materials about the corrupt committee members would be kept. Second, the confiscated fruits would not be distributed before the problem solved."⁵⁸

The next day of the catastrophic multi-village rally, while admitting the corruption was unjust, the county officials criticized Xigou villagers for their method in hanging and beating. At the same time, almost every member of the settling accounts committee was asked to be reviewed, and the embezzled valuables were returned. The third day, May 16, 1947, a special mass meeting was held for the Xigou villagers. In that meeting, the county officials declared the punishment on the corrupt committee members, while reiterating that the actions of the Xigou villagers were not appropriate.⁵⁹

Finally, the fruits from the settling-accounts campaign were distributed among the tenants of the Mas in seven districts. Of course, the Xigou villagers, who expected to hold all the valuables in their own hands, were unsatisfied. Fifty years later, the Xigou villagers still complained about this mistreatment. "Our village did not get anything good. All the valuables were taken by other villages."⁶⁰ The executive personnel from the county government were condemned by the Xigou villagers. However, the communist cadres might also be unhappy at the result of the campaign. After the chaotic

⁵⁸ Local archives, XGX19470719, "Guanyu 'Xigou' qingli qunzhong douzheng guoshi zhong ganbu tanwu wenti baogao."

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ From the interview, XG200001141RQL.

rally, the county officials did not hold another multi-village meeting to conclude the campaign. In the views of the county official Ma Huaguang who supervised the land reform in Xigou, the mass in Xigou, who struggled against the campaign leaders but not the notorious Ma landlords, were still “unawakened and backward.”⁶¹

However, at that time neither the Xigou villagers nor the communists had time to think about the unpleasant campaign. The nationalist troop had invaded into the base area, and several battles broke out in nearby areas. As a result, the county government received a notice from the central committee to halt land reform in order to support the war.⁶² Facing the threat of the war, the wrangle happening in Xigou was put aside.

II. The Rectification Campaign on the Rightists in Xigou

1. The mistakes identified

Although the settling-accounts campaign at Xigou ended in a rush, the major tasks of land reform were almost completed in Xigou. Through the voluntary contribution and the forced sale, the lands previously owned by the Ma landlords were in the hands of the peasants; through the settling-accounts campaign, the Ma landlords also repaid all kinds of exploitations they imposed over the peasants. The landlord class, including both the “enlightened landlords” and the backward elements, had been deprived of their privileges both economically and politically. Moreover, the mass of Xigou were deeply involved into the campaigns. Therefore, in July 1947, in a summary report on

⁶¹ Local archives, XGX19470719, “Guanyu ‘Xigou’ qingli qunzhong douzheng guoshi zhong ganbu tanwu wenti baogao.”

⁶² *Mizhi xianzhi*, p 17. Local archive, XGX10011990, “Jiefang zhanzheng shiqi ‘Mixian’ tudi gaige yundong.”

land reform from the prefecture government, Xigou was listed among the areas where land reform had been completed.⁶³ In that report, Xigou was mentioned several times, but mostly as a negative example of the settling-accounts campaign. It was true that something undesirable to the communists happened in Xigou, such as the corrupt committee including some local officials and the consequent struggle against the committee instead of the landlords.

Now the county government intervened to correct the mistakes in the settling-accounts campaign in Xigou: the corrupt committees were criticized; some cadres were even purged; and the embezzled valuables had been returned. In fact, the occurrence of mistakes in land reform had already been anticipated by the communists. The last article stated: “As for the right and ‘left’ deviations about land problem, local committees should follow this directive, and carry out the educations campaign to correct the mistakes in the passionate ways, which would help the mass to strive for the completion of land reform and the consolidation of the liberated areas.” Therefore, soon after the Xigou incident, the county government corrected the mistakes by a series of solutions. Due to the war, the correction was in a rush. In June 1947, four months later after the disastrous rally, the communist troop prevailed over the nationalists in the battle field. The tension was relieved, and the communists gained time to conclude the land reform campaigns. Moreover, on May 31, the executive board of the communist central committee announced that the nationwide land assembly was to be held in July.⁶⁴ It was under such

⁶³ From local archive, XGQ194707, “‘Sui qu’ tudi gaige qingkuang” (1947/07).

⁶⁴ Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi, 1996, Liu Shaoqi Nianpu [Chronological Life of Liu Shaoqi, 刘少奇年谱], vol. 2, Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, p.79. Early in January 1947, the communists scheduled to hold a land conference with the representatives from all liberated areas in May.

circumstances that the district government set out to assess the process of the land reform projects in their region, and issued the summary report which used Xigou as a negative example serving as a lesson for the neighboring area.

Xigou also caught special attention in the examination campaign launched by the prefecture government to review the previous land reform campaigns. In mid-July, when the prefecture committee issued a resolution on solving the problems in the previous campaigns, the committee also ordered the county government to conduct an investigation of the Xigou incident.⁶⁵ Several factors can help to understand the consideration of the prefecture government. First, before land reform, as the resident place of the Ma landlord family with over sixty household, Xigou was famous as a “den of the landlords” (*dizhuwo*) even in the whole border area. Second, Xigou was chosen as the experimental site by the border government. A work team with several senior officials of the border government organized the forced sale and launched the settling-accounts campaign in Xigou. Now the team members, who left before their work was done because of the war, might want to probe the later process in Xigou. Third, in the multi-village celebration held in Xigou, the settling-accounts committees were targeted, and several officials were beaten and even hanged up. News about this event must have spread widely due to the presence of the mass from seven districts, and might arouse unrest among both the peasants and cadres over the district.⁶⁶ Therefore, the prefecture government asked the executive personnel in charge of the settling-accounts campaign in

But the plan had to be cancelled due to the military tension. Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi, 1996, *Liu Shaoqi Nianpu*, pp.63&70.

⁶⁵ Local archive, XGX19901001, “Jiefang zhanzheng shiqi ‘Mixian’ tudi gaige yundong.”

⁶⁶ From local archive, XGQ194707, “Sui fenqu” tudi gaige qingkuang.”

Xigou to submit detailed reviewing report. Several weeks later, the county government sent two detailed reports to the prefecture government and then to higher party committees.⁶⁷

Since the spring of 1947, the top officials began to sum up and review the implementations of land reform policies. Liu Shaoqi, the general secretary of the central executive board and the actual leader presiding land reform, criticized the right-conservative mistakes as the major problem in the previous work. Based on his investigations on two provinces in north China, Liu believed that “the mass participation into the campaigns was still very rambling, not well-organized, and therefore not thorough,” although the mass had got a plot of land and the landlords had been struggled.⁶⁸ Therefore, in a meeting with local cadres, Liu reiterated the mass-line in the May Fourth Directive, and said that “we should mobilize ninety percent of the village population, and allow them to do everything, to solve all problems.” And Liu was clear about the worries that the mass would lead the reform in a wrong direction. “I suggest you comrades not worry about the mistakes the mass would make. The mistakes should not be scary. If ninety percent of the population insists on this way, this way should be followed.”⁶⁹

When writing their reviewing reports on the Xigou land reform, the county

⁶⁷ Two local archives. XGX19470719, “Guanyu ‘Xigou’ qingli qunzhong douzheng guoshi zhong ganbu tanwu wenti baogao.” XGX19470725, “‘Mixian’ ‘Xigou’ qingsuan douzheng qianhou.”

⁶⁸ Liu Shaoqi, 1981, “Guanyu chedi jiejie tudi wenti gei Jin-Sui tongzhi de yifengxin” [A letter on land problem to the comrades in Jin-Sui area, 关于彻底解决土地问题给晋绥同志的一封信] (1947/4/22), in Zhongyang dang’an’guan (ed.), 1981, Jiefang zhanzheng shiqi tudi gaige wenjian xuanpian (1945-1949), pp 62-68.

⁶⁹ Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi, 1998, Liu Shaoqi Zhuan [Biography of Liu Shaoqi, 刘少奇传], Vol. 1, Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, p.568.

officials might feel confused at Liu Shaoqi's suggestions. It was difficult to measure whether ninety percent of the Xigou population opposed the settling-accounts committee. However, setting sentry posts to scout the committee and hanging and beating the corrupt committees could only be the result of orchestration among quite a few villagers, instead of a conspiracy of several bad elements. If allowing the Xigou villagers, who did not want to share the confiscated properties with other villages, to take charge of the whole campaign in their way, it was hard to believe that a better result would be produced. The former tenants of the Mas in the neighboring villages would be excluded from the Settling-accounts by the Xigou villagers. On the other hand, because the land owned by the Ma landlords was beyond the village boundaries of Xigou, all the tenants of the Mas, as well as the Xigou villagers should be included in the campaign. If the settling-accounts committee could gain support from the majority of all the Ma's tenants, the campaign might go to a different way. But the tenants out of Xigou scattered in three counties. It was almost impossible for the communists to organize and mobilize the tenants and then to gain their supports. Therefore, no matter talking about Xigou villagers or all the tenants of the Mas, Liu Shaoqi's proposal about the support from ninety percent of the population could hardly work.

Nevertheless, the two reports from the county government strictly followed Liu Shaoqi's emphasis on the halfway mass participation. In the report written by Ma Huaguang, the supervisor of the settling-accounts campaign in Xigou, he recalled every step of the campaign in details. He kept criticizing his ignorance of the agency of the

mass since the very beginning of the reform.⁷⁰ The other report was co-authored by a county official and a representative of the border-government work team staying in the county. This report listed the lessons that the report writers thought the officials should learn from the Xigou incident. The incapability of the local officials was the major concern of this report. Ma Huaguang, the supervisor of the campaign in Xigou, was recognized as the person who should be criticized for his working style. After the Xigou villagers caught several corrupt committeemen, Ma forced the peasants to withdraw the sentry posts. It seems that the report believed the chaos could be avoided, if “the opinions of Xigou villagers were heard and respected.” The county government was also criticized for they failed to provide local cadres “the necessary trainings to satisfy the requirements of the mass and to avoid corruption.” Moreover, the report admitted that the lack of clear class identities among the Xigou villagers was another factor causing the incident. Yet such lack was still taken as a fault of the officials who “omitted to educate the villagers that ‘all the poor are of one family.’”⁷¹

The writers of these two reports seemed to share the same understandings on the deviations and mistakes occurring in land reform with Liu Shaoqi, the top leader who took charge of land reform nationwide. Two months after local cadres finished their reports on the Xigou incident, in a speech on the land assembly, Liu Shaoqi listed three mistakes of land reform so far: “the defectiveness of the policies,” “the demoralization within the party”, and “the bureaucratism in leadership.”⁷² The Xigou accident resonates

⁷⁰ Local archives, XGX19470725, “‘Mixian’ ‘Xigou’ qingsuan douzheng qianhou.”

⁷¹ Local archives, XGX19470719, “Guanyu ‘Xigou’ qingli qunzhong douzheng guoshi zhong ganbu tanwu wenti baogao.”

⁷² Liu Shaoqi, 1981, “Zai quanguo tudi huiyi shang de jielun” (1947/09/13), p.394.

with the second mistakes Liu identified is easy to understand. It was the corrupt cadres and activists that aroused the animosity of the villagers.

As for the third mistake, “the bureaucratism in leadership,” Liu Shaoqi pointed out that he referred to the violation of the mass-line. When the local governments “stand over the head of the mass to command the mass, instead of mobilizing and educating the mass,” these mistakes resulted from bureaucratism. In the two reports on the Xigou Incident from the country government, such mistakes had been identified, and the ignorance toward the mass was regarded as the reason of the chaos in Xigou. Moreover, the second report even clearly stated that, when the Xigou villagers expressed their disapproval of the campaign, they were fighting against bureaucratism.

In this respect, the chaos during the settling-accounts campaign in Xigou was regarded as “a demonstration of the power of the mass” and “a practical education to the cadres.”⁷³ The mistakes happening in Xigou were concluded as the result of the problem existing within the local party organizations. Therefore, through identifying and correcting the mistakes, the party authority could discipline its local members and educate them to fight against corruption among the cadres and to insist on the mass-line.

2. The rightist mistakes

Besides criticizing the mistakes in the local committees and advocating the education and rectification campaign among the party members, the high authority also adjusted the land reform policies after examining the former campaigns. The first of the three mistakes the highest leader Liu Shaoqi pointed out was “the defectiveness of the

⁷³ Local archives, XGX19470725, “‘Mixian’ ‘Xigou’ qingsuan douzheng qianhou.”

policies.” Liu admitted that the May Fourth Directive was an expedient choice, due to the political and military situation at that time. Liu argued that the Directive “should not be regarded as a mistake,” and that “it was a decision that should be made in that way.”⁷⁴ However, in his concluding speech in the land problem assembly, Liu made it clear that a “comprehensive land policy” should be formulated to replace the May Fourth Directive. In this respect, it was not surprising that the local government in Xigou area spent several months to identify and correct the rightist mistakes in the previous work.

As a basic dichotomy in distinguishing the political tendencies, the right and the “left” were first introduced to Chinese communists during their first cooperation with the nationalists in the 1920s. This dichotomy had been used by the communists in Soviet Union since the early 1900s. Originally, the right was used to refer to the conservative position; the left referred the progressive and revolutionary stand. However, the “left” with the quotation marks indicates that such “left” stands are not the real but the faked revolutionary left.⁷⁵ Chinese communists then used the rightism and the leftism to identify two kinds of mistakes. Although in different phases of the communist revolution the meanings of the rightist and leftist mistakes varied, deviations in practice which strayed from the ideal and correct direction were specifically associated with either the right or the “left” mistakes. In general, the rightism referred to the conservative tendency, which underestimated the revolutionary power and then surrendered to the anti-revolutionary forces. On the other hand, the leftist mistakes referred to radical

⁷⁴ Liu Shaoqi, 1981, “Zai quanguo tudi huiyi shang de jielun” (1947/09/13)

⁷⁵ Liu, Haibo. 2003. “Yuci Shuli: Zuo, Zuoyi, ‘Zuoqing’” [Telling the differences: Left, Left-wing, and Leftism, 语词梳理: 左、左翼、 “左倾”], Shiji Zhongguo [世纪中国] website, posted on January 13, 2003. (http://www.inmediahk.net/public/article?item_id=8030&group_id=53 checked on 2006/10/12).

revolutionary actions, which would cause the breakdown of the cooperation between the revolutionary masses and their allies.⁷⁶

Therefore, identifying and correcting the leftish or the rightish became a specific mechanism for Chinese communists to advance their revolutionary project. Chinese communist party experience several important reforms. A study on the management of Chinese communists argued that every reform Chinese communists experienced was a process of identifying and correcting mistakes (*jiupian*), through which the communists were brought back to the correct route toward new progress.⁷⁷

In a notice about the land assembly issued on May 24, 1947, to discuss the rightish and leftish mistakes in the campaigns was listed as an important theme of the assembly.⁷⁸ When evaluating the land reform project since the May Fourth Directive, Liu Shaoqi reiterated that the directive itself was not a mistake. However, he identified the mistakes, especially the rightist mistakes, in the former campaigns on the national assembly by clearly stating that “the main task is to fight against the rightism” which did not appreciate the revolutionary appeals from the peasants and failed to mobilize the mass to participate into the land reform project.⁷⁹

When the May Fourth Directive was just released, the border government encouraged the landlords to give away their lands. Several landlords in Xigou responded to this call, and were then labeled as the “enlightened gentry.” However, now the policy

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Feng, Chenglue. 2006. *Hongse Guanli* [Red-style Management, 红色管理]. Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe.

⁷⁸ Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi. Liu Shaoqi Nianpu, Vol. 2, p. 79.

⁷⁹ Liu Shaoqi, 1981, “Zai quanguo tudi huiyi shang de jielun” (1947/09/13).

of voluntary contribution was criticized as a policy grounded with rightish mistakes, which “eased up the struggle against the landlords and lulled the mass’ fight will.”⁸⁰ However, when the border government switched the policy from voluntary contribution to forced sale in December, 1946, the rightish mistakes of voluntary contribution were never been criticized. Therefore, the switch at that time was not regarded as the correction of mistakes. As a result, both voluntary contribution and the forced sale had been criticized as the rightist. The switch from voluntary contribution and the forced sale was criticized as the succession and a further development of the rightish mistakes.

The forced sale, which was once praised as “one of the best methods to solve the land problem thoroughly,” was also labeled as a rightist policy.⁸¹ In Xigou, the forced sale was completed by the border-government work team. The data showed that through the forced sale, the lands owned by the landlords for generations transferred into the hands of ordinary villagers.⁸² In a memoir written by a high official of the border government 40 years later, the forced sale was credited for its contribution in allocating land to the Xigou villagers and setting the village free.⁸³ However, since July, 1947, the forced sale was criticized for its rightist tendency, like the voluntary contribution.

⁸⁰ Local archive, XGX19471205, “Bai Shuji de chuanda baogao” [The speech of secretary Bai, 白书记的传达报告] (1947/12/05).

⁸¹ Zhonggong zhongyang, 1947/2/8 “Guanyu Shaan-Gan-Ning bianqu ruogan difang shibang tudi gongzhai jingyan de tongbao” [The report on the forced sale of land through government bonds in Shaan-Gan-Ning, 关于陕甘宁边区若干地方试办土地公债经验的通报], in Zhongguo de tudi gaige bianjibu (etc. eds.), 1988, Zhongguo Tudi Gaige Shiliao Xuanbian [The selective of the archives in land reform, 中国土地改革史料选编]. Beijing: Guofang daxue chubanshe, p. 338

⁸² In the speech criticizing the forced sale policies, the county party committee secretary Bai listed these data: through the forced sale, the lands in the hands of the landlords decreased from 11.2 shang to 2.84 shang in the three sub-districts including Xigou. Local archive, XGX19471205, “Bai Shuji de chuanda baogao.”

⁸³ Li Weihai, 1990, “Shaan-Gan-Ning bianqu zhengfu gongzuo huigu.”

“During the forced sale, it was the local government that purchased the lands from the landlords and then distributed them to the peasants. The peasants did not contact the landlords directly.” The critics declared that the forced sale policies “did not encourage the peasants to stand up and beat down the landlord class.”⁸⁴

These criticisms reveal that in land reform the communists valued the successful mass participation in class struggles against the landlord class over the redistribution of land. With such priorities, the Xigou incident caused by the self-motivated mass participation was labeled as the result of the rightist mistake, for its failure to mobilize the villagers to target the landlords. Therefore, the local cadres were criticized for their inability to take recognition of the “power of the mass,” while the wrongdoings of the villagers were not investigated any more.

On the other hand, the Xigou villagers were never punished for either their robbery from the landlords on the night before the first multi-village rally or the struggle against the settling-accounts committee in the second rally. However, identifying and correcting mistakes was by no means a failure but a success of the communists. The previous campaigns in Xigou had already demonstrated the power of the communist in intervening village life and even turning the village upside down. Through the deliberate identification and correction of mistakes, the Xigou villagers learned that it was the high authority of the communists that set down the criteria of the proper actions and the rules of everyday life. “Everything was determined by them (the communists).” A former petty-landlord in Xigou, Ma Ruiyun, commented on the switching policies before and

⁸⁴ Local archive, XG19471205, “Bai Shuji de chuanda baogao.”

after the correction.⁸⁵ If the communists had to pose a gesture to make compromise with the landlords during the resistance war and the villagers at the beginning of the redistribution project, the rectifications demonstrated the role of the communists as the superintendents and judges over village affairs.

Moreover, through the rectification campaign, several corrupt local cadres were purged; and the “incapable” officials, such as Ma Huaguang, the supervisor of the settling-accounts in Xigou, were asked to do self-criticism. The treatments of the local officials also informed the peasants that their participations and reactions were taken into account by the communists. The rectification had shown to both local cadres and the villagers that the party sought to bind them to its agenda, and would not hesitate to punish those who did not follow them. Moreover, it also convinced the peasants that they could affect the fate of their local leaders through their involvement into the land reform campaigns.⁸⁶ At this point, the communist efforts to identifying and correcting mistakes reveal the disciplinary practice through a complex interaction among the central committee, local cadre, and the villagers.

The reviewing on the campaign proceeding in Xigou identified several mistakes. Similar procedures were going on in all communist controlled area as the communist leaders proposed. It is hard to believe that a village without any flaw could be found, especially in consideration of the fact that the general policies, such as the forced sale, were criticized as the “rightist capitulationism” to the landlord class. The high authority frankly admitted that the May Fourth Directive was not revolutionary enough. Liu

⁸⁵ From the interview, XG200001153MRY.

⁸⁶ See Esherick, Joseph. 1994. “Deconstructing the construction of the Party-State: Gulin County in the Shaan-Gan-Ning Border Region,” in *China Quarterly*, no. 140, pp.1052-1079.

Shaoqi, who drafted the Directive, even argued that the flaws in this guiding policies led to the mistakes. As discussed above, in Liu Shaoqi's view, although the May Fourth Directive itself was not a mistake, it was an expedient choice in the specific context of the political and military situation at that time. Liu believed that the rightist policies were decisions that had to be made in that way.⁸⁷ In this respect, the contingency in practice were admitted. The communists should not be regarded as strict doctrinaires who only wanted to stick to their beliefs and creeds. Instead, Chinese communists were flexible in dealing with actual situations.⁸⁸ The voluntary contribution and the forced sale both are choices based on the specific social and political relationship in local areas.

However, the contingent decisions soon lost their legitimacy when the contexts on which those choices depended changed. The former contingent achievements were later labeled as "mistakes," and a campaign to correct such mistakes followed. The tolerance of the adjustments on policies was questionable on the one hand. On the other hand, the mistakes were also identified by the communists for their specific purpose. There existed some problems in the campaigns in Xigou, such as the corruption of the activists and the refusal of class identity among the Xigou villagers. However, in the rectification campaign the actual troubles were not targeted, but were regarded as the achievement with defects under the influence of the rightist tendency. Instead of dealing with the actual troubles, the communist launched the inner-party rectification campaign (*zhengdang*) and reiterated the mass-line. In this respect, the retroactive identification of mistakes actually foresaw another rectification of the process itself in the near future.

⁸⁷ Liu Shaoqi, 1981, "Zai quanguo tudi huiyi shang de jielun" (1947/09/13).

⁸⁸ Shue, Vivienne. 1990, *Peasant China in transition: the dynamics of development toward socialism, 1949-1956*.

Therefore, the rectification campaigns did not directly fight against the misconducts in the previous campaign, but imposed the new discipline over the party as well as the mass through defining and correcting the mistakes.

III. The Epilogue of Land Reform in Xigou

1. A better directive

From July 17 to September 13, 1947, a national land assembly was held. In the assembly, the executive central committee and the officials from all communist base areas not only reviewed the previous work to solve land problem and identified mistakes, but also worked to bring out a “better directive to solve the land problem” to replace the May Fourth Directive.⁸⁹

The 1947 Basic Agrarian Law (*Zhongguo tudifa dagang*) was the final product of the two-month discussions. In William Hinton’s view, the basic law played as important a role as the Emancipation Proclamation in the American Civil War.⁹⁰ By declaring equal distribution of land among villagers, the basic law aimed to wipe out the agrarian system of feudal and semi-feudal exploitation, which spelled the doom of the landlord order in rural China. The basic law was formulated on the basis of the identification and correction of the mistakes in former campaigns. Compared with the May Fourth Directive, which took into consideration the livelihood of the middle and small landlords, the new policy did not cover its hostility toward the landlord class.

As the director of the land assembly, Liu Shaoqi regarded the assembly as a

⁸⁹ Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi. Liu Shaoqi Nianpu, Vol. 2, p. 79.

⁹⁰ Hinton, William. 1966. *Fanshen: a Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village*. New York, NY: Vintage Books, p.8.

correction campaign which targeted and swiped off all mistakes. He concluded: “The assembly is a success. Mistakes have been identified and corrected, and then the truth has been found out.” The correction campaign was regarded as an indispensable procedure to bring out and implement the new policy. However, the correction campaign did not bring an end to the mistakes in land reform. “In the future, we should continue to find our mistakes.”⁹¹

2. The avoided leftist mistakes

In October 1947, almost immediately after the county government of Xigou received the guidelines of the Basic Law, new campaigns were launched to put the new directives into effect. Since the 1946 campaigns had been criticized as rightist for its conservatism, the local cadres tried to encourage and support more radical and violent actions in the new campaign. While clearly targeting feudal and semi-feudal exploitation, the Basic Law put the landlords and rich peasants—whose incomes relied on other villagers’ work more or less—under the severe fire. Beating the landlords and rich peasants became a common ritual in the neighboring villages around Xigou. In the entire county, 266 landlords and rich peasants were beaten, and 14 people were beaten to death.⁹² Moreover, under such radical tendency, many peasants whose income came from their own cultivation on their own land were also labeled as enemies of the revolution—either the landlord or rich peasant class. These misfortune peasantries thus were tortured physically and mentally.

⁹¹ Liu Shaoqi, 1981, “Zai quanguo tudi huiyi shang de jielun” (1947/09/13).

⁹² Local archive, XGX19480410, “‘Mixian’ tugai zongjie baogao” [The summary on the land reform in “Mi” county, 米县土改总结报告](1948/04/10), “Mi” xian zhengfu.

In the spring of 1948, four months after the kickoff of the new campaigns, the county government had to scheme a new rectification campaign to correct the new mistakes occurring during the implementation of the Basic Law. It was believed that among the 440 households who were labeled as from the landlord class in the county, 227 households—over fifty percent—only owned a very small plot of land. Therefore, they were wrongly categorized as the landlord class, and the torture they endured was then mistreatment that required remedies.⁹³

The mistakes that occurred in the county of Xigou were by no means unique. The new campaigns in all communist controlled areas were radical, and this tendency soon caught attention of the communist leaders. The Basic Law were officially released in October 1947, and in late-November, the communist top leaders had already changed their emphasis from correcting the rightist-conservative mistakes to avoiding the leftist-radical. On November 29 1947, the central committee issued two guidelines about class classification. In the notice about these two documents, the central committee made it clear that “these two documents are issued to correct leftism.”⁹⁴

When these documents targeting leftism were issued, Xigou was the stationed place of the central committee. Since the nationalist troops invaded the border area in April 1947, the communist central committee had been on move. Finally the central committee arrived at Xigou in mid-November, and then stayed there in the following four months. After issuing the two documents against the leftist deviations, the central

⁹³ Local archive, XG19480410, “Mi Xian tugai zongjie baogao.”

⁹⁴ Zhonggong zhongyang, 1947/11/19, “zhengqiu guanyu jieji fenxi de yijian” [To solicit suggestions on class-classification, 征求关于阶级分析的意见], in Zhongguo tudi gaige bianjibu (ed.) 1988, *Zhongguo tudi gaige shiliao xuanbian*, p.438.

committee conducted a series of efforts to correct the new mistakes. In December 1947, the extended assembly of the central committee was held in Xigou. While the national land assembly could be regarded as a battle against rightism, the December assembly became a landmark as it launched the new battle against leftism—the radical tendency in land reform. In the assembly, Mao Zedong, the already supreme leader of Chinese communist, pointed out that the danger of rightism toward land reform had been solved and the new problem was to solve the leftist mistakes. Mao called upon the attention of all communists, “now ‘leftism’ has become a tendency, and all party member should fight against this tendency.”⁹⁵

However, due to the war with the nationalists at that time, Mao’s call did not get wide responses until spring 1948. In the county’s summary report on the correction of leftism, the county officials admitted that, although the county government received the new direction earlier than other areas under communist control, they did not respond promptly. Even the He district government which was the direct supervisor of Xigou did not oppose the radical and violent actions for a long time: landlords were beaten cruelly and even the middle-peasants were tortured. Nevertheless, fortunately, thanks to the station of the central committee, Xigou villagers had been in a way exempted from leftism.

The new campaign of land reform guided by the Basic Law had just been launched in Xigou, when the central committee moved in. In that wartime, the central committee was stationed in Xigou was a top secret even to the county government.

⁹⁵ Mao, Zedong 1991. “muqian xingshi he women de renwu” [the current situation and our task, 目前的形势和我们的任务] (1947/12/25), in Mao, Zedong, 1991, Mao Zedong xuanji [Selectives of Mao Zedong, 毛泽东选集], Vol 4, Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, pp.1257-1258.

People only knew that a group of leaders moved in Xigou, but few knew that it was the central committee and their chairman Mao. At the same time, the central committee also did not want to interrupt the work of local government. Therefore, the campaign in Xigou was going on in the same directions just like other villages in the communist bases, and radical and violent actions happened. A struggle session which aimed to “blow out the prestige of the Ma landlords” was scheduled in mid-December, just several days before the extended assembly of the central committee.⁹⁶

“The struggle session was held right after my first meal.”⁹⁷ Li Xiulan, an old woman who was over twenty in 1947 clearly recalled that the struggle session was scheduled in a cold winter day, when the villagers only had two meals a day. Three persons from the Ma landlord households were called to the session: two men and one old woman. “They were ordered to take off their coat, and then hanged up over a branch of the tree.”⁹⁸ This struggle session was one of many mass meetings that the villagers were demanded to attend. Almost all villagers who attended that struggle session could describe that session in vivid details. The bloody scene of that struggle session did impress the Xigou villagers. “Some one beat the old lady by a lash, and she bled.”⁹⁹ Li Xiulan recalled. “I was frightened, and closed my eyes immediately.”¹⁰⁰

However, the struggle session which was scheduled to last two days was called off at noon of its first day. “We got a command to cancel the struggle session scheduled

⁹⁶ From interview, XG199808213GCD.

⁹⁷ From interview, XG200001142TXL.

⁹⁸ From interview, XG200510241MZY.

⁹⁹ From interviews, XG199708261LCG, XG199805153MYJ, and XG200001162SXY.

¹⁰⁰ From interview, XG199805291LXL.

in the next day.” Liu Zhengyun who was in charge of the village at that time remembered clearly.¹⁰¹ “There might be some cadres or soldiers who were in the struggle session and who witnessed the bloodshed. He reported to chairman Mao, and it was chairman Mao who stopped the struggle.”¹⁰² Although almost no villager knew that chairman Mao was stationed in their village until Mao left, they gave this credit to Mao directly. “There were some people who were beaten to death in the surrounding area, but no one was killed in our village.”¹⁰³ In contrast to other places not only in Mi county but also in the entire communist controlled area, Xigou villagers got some luck. Forty years later, the secretary of county committee admitted in his memoir that Xigou villagers enjoyed a relative peaceful time while other village were in turbulence. “The central committee was in Xigou, and we had to stop the land reform campaign there. The Ma landlords were not tortured as harshly as the rich people in other villages.”¹⁰⁴ Comparing to the harsh struggles in other places, the luck of the Ma landlords was rare and precious—they were saved directly by the party’s central committee.

As soon as the radical leftism occurred in Xigou, the whole land reform project was stopped in Xigou. In the spring of 1948, right after the rectification campaign to correct the leftism had finished nationwide, the central committee left Xigou. Soon the county government issued the land ownership certificate (*tudizheng*) to every household, and land reform drew its conclusion in Xigou.

¹⁰¹ From interview, XG200001122LZY.

¹⁰² From interview, XG199805301GCM

¹⁰³ From interview, XG199805291LXL.

¹⁰⁴ Bai Zhiming, 1990, “Guanyu tugai de huiyilu” [A memoir on land reform, 关于土改的回忆录], in local archive, XGX19901001, “Jiefang zhanzheng shiqi ‘Mixian’ tudi gaige yundong”.

IV. Mistakes and the Land Redistribution

By the year of 1946, as a village locating at the periphery of the long-time communist base, Xigou had been under the strong influence of the communists for a couple of years, although the power of the communist party was still relative weak in this “den of the landlords”. After the release of the May Fourth Directive in the spring of 1946, the launch of land reform kicked off somewhat an adventure of the Xigou villagers. By April 1948 when the county government drew a conclusion on land reform, Xigou experienced some profound changes in these two years. The former economic and social arrangements turned over through confiscating the properties of some villagers and then redistributing these among villagers.

Moreover, through examining the process of land reform in Xigou, it is obvious that land reform was not only about land. The communists went through some difficult time in initiating the changes in rural China, and these difficulties were labeled as mistakes. Therefore, the endeavor to identify and correct mistakes became a constant concern through land reform at different levels. In this respect, the redistribution was never the ultimate aim of the communist land reform. Land reform was not only a reform about land redistribution, but also a constant fight against all kinds of “mistakes.”

What were the dynamics of the communists to categorize the difficulties as “mistakes”? Why did identifying and correcting mistakes play such an important role in a reform aimed at economic allocations in rural China? Based on the experiences of Xigou villagers, it seemed that the troubles the villagers made did challenge the agenda set by the communists. However, when local agencies were associated with some identified

“mistakes,” the communists re-acclaimed their role as the highest judges who decided the standards of people’s behavior. As a result, the communist efforts targeting “mistakes” in land reform could be regarded as an endeavor for normalization. Namely, through the rhetoric of “mistakes”, the communists occupied a pedagogic role to discipline the localities, including both the villagers and local officials. Local practices were observed and under surveillance.

At this point, the rectification campaigns in land reform functioned as a disciplinary revolution to foster a new set of standards for the birth of a new modern state power. Firstly, through identifying and correcting mistakes, the communist party acclaimed and reinforced its pedagogic role in the new state. In addition, through valuing the local implementations of the land reform policies, the rectification campaigns imposed the discipline over its agents at different levels. The corrupt local cadres were kicked off, while the remained officials had got trained and educated through the correction of mistakes. Furthermore, while the reactions of local communities were taken into consideration in the rectifications targeting the local cadres, the communists incorporated local people into the rectifying efforts. The direct involvements of villagers into the rectification campaigns demonstrated the successful penetration of the communists into local communities, and constructed the popular basis of the communist revolution. Compare to other state-builders, such as the nationalists and Japanese, the communist party were effectively involved into the grassroots affairs, and also impose continuous training and surveillance over the agents. Therefore, the communists’ efforts to identifying and correcting mistakes were crucial for the building-up of a new modern state.

The land reform process in Xigou sheds light on both local agencies and policy adjustments at the beginning stage of land reform. Xigou was very distinctive at some aspects. Both the powerful landlord groups and the specific relations between the landlord and other villagers made the village unique. How could the stories of the Xigou land reform reflect some common experiences in rural China? Were the difficulties that the communists confronted there a result of the specific features of Xigou? Were the attempts to identify and correct mistakes simply policy adjustments of the communists, who were new-hands in carrying out land reform policies?

In order to make a broader argument about the contribution of the rectification campaigns, two more villages will be brought into the project. The examination would extend to different steps of the communist land reform, which cover both the chronological and geographic variation. These two villages not only are located in different communist areas, but also carried out the land reform campaigns at different phases of the whole process of the communist land reform. The stories of the other two villages, together with the experiences of Xigou village, could help us to understand whether the identification and correction of mistakes were temporary aims or constant endeavors of the communists.

Chapter Four

Rectifications and the Disciplinary Revolution:

Land Reform in Beiwan

Beautiful dreamer, out on the sea,
Mermaids are chaunting with wild lorelie;
Over the streamlet vapors are borne,
Waiting to fade at the bright coming morn.

----From "Beautiful Dreamer Serenade"¹

In the eyes of the communists, the inequality of land ownership was the root of poverty in rural China, which was regarded as a reason for China's defeat at the hands of imperialism. It followed that land revolution was declared as "the basic content of the Chinese revolution" by the communists.² Since its birth, the Chinese communist party carried out a series of policies targeting the land problem. After the defeat of the Japanese invaders, Chinese communists gradually gave up their rent-reduction policies, which efficiently incorporated both land owners and landless tenants into a national front. Since 1946, the CCP initiated a land redistribution project throughout its controlled areas, and the inequality of land ownership was an obvious target of the communist efforts.

¹ See Foster, Stephen. 1973. *Household Songs, Earlier American Music 12*. New York, NY: Da Capo Press, pp. 89-93.

² See "Resolutions of the August 7 Emergency Conference". In Brandt, Conard, Benjamin Schwarts and John K Fairbank, 1969, *A Documentary History of Chinese Communism*. New York. NY: Atheneum, p.118.

However, “land to the tiller” was not the ultimate aim of Chinese communists, but the means to initiate a comprehensive “social revolution.”³ Land reform was not only the redistribution of land in the village, but also a political campaign to build up a new state over local communities. Building up a new state through the central administration to the grassroots to was a crucial part of the communist social revolution. During the 1946-1952 land reform, Chinese communists grounded the state power on the village through enforcing its disciplinary power as well as through setting up political organizations, such as peasant association and village militia.

Xigou, as a communist base, was one of the earliest areas that experienced the transformations initiated by land reform.⁴ From the requisitioned purchase in 1946 to the issue of land ownership certificates in the spring of 1948, two rectification campaigns were initiated in Xigou area. The land reform project had been carried out, but the actual process in villages always deviated from the expectations of the communists. Various mistakes were identified. The unconscious mass, the incompetent local cadres, and the improper policies all had been scrutinized and criticized. Then, corrections of these mistakes were enforced. The importance to educate and enlighten the mass at the ground level was reiterated. The cadres were required to make self-criticisms through writing work reports or making public presentations. In some public sessions, a few villagers might also be asked to present some self-criticism, although such criticism was not a requirement to every one. New directives were constantly promulgated as soon as some mistakes were identified. The identifications and corrections of previous mistakes

³ Skocpol, Theda. 1979. *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China*.

⁴ Li Weihang, 1990, “Shaan-Gan-Ning bianqu zhengfu gongzuo huigu”, p. 95

became a constant topic of the land reform. In fact, the rectifications in land reform actually functioned as a disciplinary revolution fighting against “mistakes.”

Since the communists launched the land redistribution project in 1946, this reform had been neither only for land nor simply about land. In the communist bases, land reform served the communist project of building up the new state. Through identifying and correcting mistakes, the communists put their disciplinary power into effect from the ground level up. With its military victories, the communists gradually claimed control over broader territories. These later-claimed areas were referred by the communists as the later-liberated areas (*xin jiefang qu/ xin qu*), and accordingly the communist base areas, such as Xigou, were classified as the formerly-liberated areas (*lao jiefang qu/ lao qu*).⁵ Soon after the takeover, the communists launched land reform through these later-claimed territories to liberate the rural population, although the war with the nationalists was still going on. How were the experiences of these later-liberated areas different from the formerly-liberated areas? Had the communists learned lessons from the base areas, which could help them to avoid some mistakes in their later-claimed territories? During the land reform in the later-liberated areas, were mistakes still the big concern of the communists while their power penetrated villages? This chapter brings Beiwan, a village in the later-liberated area, into the big picture of the land reform. The Beiwan story could continue the study on the communist journey to build up a new state, as well as provide a comparison with the experiences of Xigou.

⁵ The differentiation between the later-liberated areas and the formerly-liberated areas were proposed by Mao Zedong in order to enforce different projects to carry out the land redistribution. See “Liu Shaoqi guanyu tudifa shishi ying fen sanzong diqu wenti gei Mao Zedong de Baogao” [A report from Liu Shaoqi to Mao Zedong on the enforcement of the Agrarian Law on three areas, 刘少奇关于土地法实施应分三种地区问题给毛泽东的报告](February 5, 1948). In Zhongguo de tudi gage bianjibu (eds.), 1988, *Zhongguo tudi gage shiliao xuanbian*. Beijing: Guofang daxue chubanshe: p. 459.

The later-liberated Beiwan was taken over by the communists in October 1948, in their march toward Beijing, the former capital of the empire. Ten mile south of Beiwan, there stands a grand stone pass, *Shanhaiguan*. As the east end of the Great Wall, Shanhaiguan successfully served as the frontier of defense against the attacks of the Japanese invaders in the early 1930s. As a result, Beiwan had been a border village of the Japanese puppet government, Manchukuo, since 1932. In the following fifteen years, Beiwan was steadily under the control of the Manchukuo administration. Probably due to its closeness to Shanhaiguan, both the Japanese and the nationalist troop were stationed around their border. No trace of the communist guerilla could be found during this period, although a few communist bases were set up in the hilly areas far north.⁶ After the defeat of the Japanese in the fall of 1945, the communist force soon took over Beiwan area. However, only one month later, the communists withdrew to their bases in the northern hilly areas, since the nationalist troops set out their march to seize the Manchukuo area from Shanhaiguan. Therefore, the short takeover of the communists did not have any influence on Beiwan.

At that time, Beiwan villagers did not know much about the transformations the communists would bring out. But since the summer of 1946, the land redistribution projects had been carried out in the hilly communist bases about thirty miles north of Beiwan. The land reforms in the northern base took place almost at the same time of the reform in Xigou, and thus under the direction of the exact same regulations as Xigou. In

⁶ A large number of Japanese troops were stationed in Beiwan area, the border area of the Manchukuo. Therefore, the communist guerilla bases were not established until October, 1943. The two bases were located deep in the hilly northern area. Local archive, BWX198006, "1931-1945 kangri zhanzheng shiqi 'suixian' xianwei dashiji" [The memorabilia of the county committee in "Sui" county during the anti-Japanese War, 1931-1945 抗日战争时期“绥县”县委大事记], written by "Sui" county archive bureau.

1946-1948, similar mistakes were identified in the two base areas thousands of miles apart, and a series of rectifications were enforced.⁷ When Beiwan was declared as a later-liberated area of the communists in the fall of 1948, the land reforms in the base areas just drew to a conclusion. The rectification campaigns in the base areas had provided adequate trainings to the cadres, who were dispatched to Beiwan to direct and organize the land redistribution. Moreover, after various mistakes were identified in the base areas, the central committee of the communist party also reformulated its land reform policies. The land redistribution projects in later-liberated Beiwan were carried out under different circumstances from the base areas, such as Xigou. The communists did not have any direct connections to Beiwan, a village controlled by the Japanese before. The land reform projects in Xigou must have taught the communists something. Beiwan villagers might have a different experience, when the communists tried to build up their power at the ground level. If the land reform was only about landownership, then, after the twice ratification campaigns in the base areas, the communists should learn how to carry out the land reform correctly in the later liberated areas. Beiwan villagers might witness a smoother land reform than that in Xigou.

However, the Beiwan story would reveal that the rectification campaigns were still a constant topic of the land reform in the later-liberated areas. This chapter will trace the pragmatic process of the land reform projects in Beiwan. Firstly, after a brief introduction on the historical background of Beiwan, this chapter will discuss the rectification campaigns in neighboring communist bases and their possible influences on

⁷ Local archive, BWX194805, “Tudi pingfen yudong zhong fasheng de yixie wenti” [The problems of the land distribution campaign, 平分土地运动中发生的一些问题], written by the Communist party committee of Sui county.

Beiwan. Next, the land reform campaigns in Beiwan will be scrutinized step by step. Both the tactics in mobilizing the mass and the responses of the villagers will be examined to highlight a process of the interaction between the communist blueprint and the local practices. Like the discussion on the experiences of Xigou in the previous chapter, through detailed examinations of the process of the land reform in Beiwan, this chapter will also explore the following questions: What were the mistakes identified? What were recognized as the causes of these mistakes? Moreover, the techniques used to identify and correct mistakes will be paid special attention to. To what extent did these techniques initiate changes of village life and then facilitate the building-up of the new state at the ground level? It can be concluded that through identifying and correcting mistakes the rectification campaigns during the communist land reform served as a disciplinary revolution for the formation of the new state.

I. The Later-claimed Beiwan

1. Land for the small peasantry

In Chinese history, the Northeast China was the original living place for the nomadic tribes of Manchuria, and the royal family of Qing dynasty was from this area. Since the mid-seventeenth century, a great amount of peasants mainly from the Han ethnic group, including the forefathers of Beiwan villagers, had settled down in this area. The land inequality was not very serious in these later cultivated villages, like Beiwan. Different from the polarity of land ownership between the Ma landlord families and their tenants in Xigou, most of the households in Beiwan owned their own small plots. According to a survey conducted by the county administration in 1936, 32.5 percent of

the households in the county owned about 10 *mu* (1.6 acres) of land, and the other 22.5 percent owned 5 *mu* (0.8 acres).⁸ Namely, the majority of the people in this area owned an adequate plot to make a living. Wang Zhun, the record keeper of Beiwan during land reform, recalled that excluding the big landholders, the average land owned by Beiwan villagers before the land redistribution was slightly over 2 *mu* (0.4 acres) per person, the average of the district.⁹ Although the small plots probably were not enough for food, these smallholders in Beiwan were not heavily dependent on the big.

In addition to the small plots they owned, Beiwan villagers also greatly benefited from the geographic location of the village. As a coast village in a gulf, Beiwan provides plenty fishery. To some villagers, fishing was a significant supplement of crop planting for their families in generations.¹⁰ Moreover, due to the closeness to the pass of Shanhaiguan, village youth used to work as the apprentice servants in the shops or inns near the pass. Some young men even found similar jobs in Shenyang, the capital city of the province. The small amount of the apprentice salary sometimes would be a great aid to the family. “I came back home for the Chinese New Year every year.” Guo Yezhun had worked in a noodle shop for about five years. “Only after I gave the salary I earned to my father, would my families be able to have some meat for the celebration.”¹¹

⁸ See *Suixian xianzhi*, pp. 119-120. 2 percent of the households could be regarded as the big land owner, whose land was over 100 *mu* (16 acres). 5 percent of the household could live fairly well through the average 50 *mu* (8 acres) of land. The rest 38 percent was categorized as the land owners whose plots were less than 5 *mu* (0.8 acres). There might be some households which did not own any land at all. But this group might not be so significant. Otherwise, the people who conduct the survey might indicate that by setting up a special category.

⁹ From interview, BW199807081WZ. Local archive, BW19491201, “‘Suixian, ge qu tugaiqian jieji qingkuang biao’”.

¹⁰ From interview, BW200607151WZJ.

¹¹ From interview, BW199807121GYZ.

From this perspective, just like the general situation in rural North and Northeast China, the small-farm economy characterized the village life in Beiwan. Their own small plots, together with the various incomes out of agricultural production, could not only satisfy the basic needs of the small-landholding families, but also provide the opportunities for their children to pursue a better life.¹² In fact, the two big landholders in Beiwan were both originally from small landholding families, and their fortune was made through their engagements in business. It was the success outside of agriculture production that financed these two former small landholders to purchase more land and become the biggest land owners of Beiwan.¹³

Between 1932 and 1945, Beiwan was steadily controlled by the Japanese puppet administration. Although the levies for each village were increased and more items were taxed, Beiwan villagers did not experience dramatic changes threatening their small-peasant economy.¹⁴ On the contrary, through enacting the law of compulsory education at the ground level, more young villagers received adequate education, including the Japanese language training. An elementary school was set up right next to Beiwan in 1936, and more and more village youth would move from village to cities.¹⁵ Before the communists launched the land redistribution projects in 1949, the small-peasant economy still dominated Beiwan village.

¹² Discussions on the small peasant economy can be found in the monograph of Philip Huang. See Huang, Philip. 1985, *The Peasant Economy and Social Change in North China*.

¹³ From interview, BW199807082ZWQ and BW199807111WZ.

¹⁴ During the Japanese occupation in 1932-1945, the taxes increased significantly. In 1936, the local taxes the county government collected was 250% of the taxes collected in 1925. See *Suizhong xianzhi*, p.316.

¹⁵ From interview, BW200607191YT. The free compulsory education was a project proposed by the regional governor Zhang Xueliang in 1930. After taking over northeast China, the Japanese invaders continued Zhang's project. See *Suizhong xianzhi*, pp. 433-434.

2. Land reform in a base nearby

In the year of 1946, several months after the Japanese invaders were driven out off the county and two years before the communist takeover of Beiwan, the communists launched the land redistribution project in their bases, the hilly area thirty miles north from Beiwan. In early July, the leaders of these separate north-mountain bases (*Beishan jiefangqu*) received the May Fourth Directive forwarded by the communist Northeast Bureau with a specific resolution about the regional land reform.¹⁶ At that time, the north-mountain bases launched the “weeding-traitor” (*chujian*) campaign and enacted the 25% rent reduction. Through these policies, the leaders of these separated bases intended to “beat down the helpers of the Japanese invaders, and strengthen the ties with both the poor and the rich” who helped the communist guerilla out during the war against the Japanese invaders.¹⁷ Following the call on land redistribution from the central committee, the communist county committee stopped the rent reduction campaign in the north-mountain base. It even stationed in the base to boost the land redistribution.

The north-mountain base in the nearby area of Beiwan was just established after the defeat of the Japanese. However, the land reform there was launched almost at the same time as the long-term communist base Xigou. The principle of “land to the tiller” in

¹⁶ See Local archive, BWX194805, “Tudi pingfen yudong zhong fasheng de yixie wenti”. Also Chang Wenyu, 1984b, “‘Suixian’ de tudi gaige” [The land reform in “Sui” county, “绥县”的土地改革], in Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi suixian weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao bianxuan weiyuanhui (eds.), *Wenshi ziliao xuanbian* [The selective collection of literary history, 文史资料选编], vol. 5: pp. 111-121.

¹⁷ See Chang Wenyu, 1984a, “Suixian” tukai qian de sange yundong [Three campaigns before the land reform in “Sui” county, “绥县”土改前的三个运动], in Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi suixian weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao bianxuan weiyuanhui (eds.), 1984, *Wenshi ziliao xuanbian*, vol. 5, pp.103-110.

the May Fourth Directive had become the basic guideline for these two bases thousands miles apart. Different from the Ma landlord families in Xigou, the big landholders did not join the coalition with the communists against the Japanese, although some of them assisted the communist guerrilla in the wartime. As a result, the “settling-accounts” (*qingsuan*) endorsed in the May Fourth Directive was listed as the only solution to acquire land from the landlords in northeast China.¹⁸ Neither the voluntary contribution/sale of the landlords nor the requisitioned purchase by government bonds, which could alleviate the pressure on the landlords, was enacted in Beiwan area.

As a result, the “settling-account” campaign was launched about six months earlier in the later-established north-mountain base than in the long-term base Xigou. In July and August, 1946. Sixty-six villages in the north-mountain base devoted themselves to “calculating the rent and interest, calculating extra exploitation, calculating the unpaid service” and other burdens the landlords had imposed on their tenants.¹⁹ In the north-mountain base, most of the peasants owned a small plot, so the big landholders and the average villagers made their own life relatively independent, especially compared to the situation in Xigou. During the “settling-accounts” campaign, the relative independence between the big-landholders and other villagers did not cause big turbulence like the unrest in Xigou. Within two months, the big landholders in the north-mountain bases gave up land and fruit trees, which their tenants received as remedies.²⁰

¹⁸ See “Zhonggong zhongyang qingbaobu guanyu jieju tudi wenti d fangshi gei dongbeiju de zhishi” [The Directive from the communist central committee to the northeast bureau on the solution of land problem, 中共中央情报部关于解决土地问题的方式给东北局的指示], in *Zhongguo de tudi gaige bianjibu* (etc. eds.). 1988. *Zhongguo tudi gaige shiliao xuanbian*, p.252.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ See Chang Wenyu, 1984, “Suixian de tudi gaige”, pp.112-113.

Nevertheless, right after the relatively successful “settling-accounts” campaign, an examination campaign (*fucha*) repeated the communist efforts to identify and correct mistakes in the previous project, as what happened in Xigou after the great turbulence. The county committee laid blames on the local cadres for running the “settling-accounts” campaign all by themselves without adequately mobilizing the mass to take part in.²¹ Moreover, although the landlords handed some plots to their tenants through “settling-accounts,” some former tenants still gave rents to the landlords. The county committee concluded that the “settling-accounts” campaign did not take down the big-landholders from their privileged status, even though they had suffered some economic loss.²² The examination formulated by the leaders of the north-mountain base seemed to be a duplicate copy of the report written by the sad local cadres six months later after witnessing the chaotic “settling-accounts” campaign in Xigou. Even more dramatically, in October 1946, after identifying the mistakes and the causes, the leaders of the north-mountain bases faced the exact same difficulty as the Xigou cadres. Due to the pressure from the war with the nationalists, the rectification campaign in the north-mountain base was postponed.

In the early stage of the land reform, the -established north-mountain base near Beiwan had some common experiences with the long-term base Xigou. The settling-accounts campaigns were not launched at the same time in these two bases, and the outcomes of the campaigns were different too: it was relatively successful in the north-

²¹ See *Mizhi xianzhi*, p.120.

²² See Chang Wenyu, 1984, “Suixian de tudi gaige”, pp.113-114.

mountain base, while it led to a struggle against local cadres in Xigou.²³ Despite the different outcomes, following the settling-account, in both base areas, careful examinations were carried out to identify the wrongdoings of the previous project. The wrongdoings were then marked as mistakes, which were subjected to be corrected through rectification campaigns. Due to the war with the nationalists, the rectification campaigns were postponed in the both villages. Later on, the rectification campaigns in the two villages went through quite differently. Because the central committee of the communists stationed in Xigou, the rectification campaign was hardly put into action. On the other hand, the rectification campaign in the north-mountain base was fully carried out and led to an upsurge of the land reform.

The rectification campaign following the settling-accounts was not a local project. Instead, it was the regional administration the northeast bureau that asked all villages in the base areas to concentrate on correcting the mistakes occurring during the settling-accounts campaign. According to a directive the northeast bureau issued in November 1946, the settling-account campaigns in most of the base areas were “half-cooked rice” (*jiashengfan*). The bureau asked local governments to complete the uncompleted job and cook “half-cooked rice” through.²⁴ In February 1947, when the communist troops gradually prevailed over the nationalists in battlefields, another directive from the

²³ In the memory of a county official, it is believed that great progress had been made during the settling-accounts campaign in the north-mountain base. However, in the reports written by the work-team members, the authors were moaning on the difficulties they encountered. See Chang Wenyu, 1984, “Suixian de tudi gaige”, pp.112-113. Local archives, XGC19470725, “‘Mixian’ ‘Xigou’ qingsuan douzheng qianhou.”

²⁴ “Dongbeiju guanyu jiejie tugai yundong zhong ‘banshengbushu’ de wenti de zhishi” [The northeast bureau’s directives to solve the “half-cooked” problem in land reform from the, 东北局关于解决土改运动中“半生不熟”的问题的指示] (1946/11/21), in *Zhongguo de tudi gaige bianjibu* (etc. eds.), 1988. *Zhongguo tudi gaige shiliao xuanbian*, pp.326-327.

northeast bureau urged rectification campaigns to improve agricultural production.²⁵ From March to August 1947, rectification campaigns were carried out over the north mountain base area. The campaigns recalculated the remedies that the big landholders owed, and then more belongings of the landlords were confiscated. Moreover, the campaigns believed that the big landholders were treated too friendly in the settling-accounts campaign. As a result, the rectification campaigns encouraged violence against the landlords by labeling these harsh struggles as “justified revolutionary revenge.”²⁶

When the leaders of the north mountain base area were enthusiastic at the rectification campaigns, the executive central committee held a national land assembly from July 17 to September 13, 1947. The assembly did not pay any attention to the violent struggles in the rectification campaigns in the whole northwest region. Instead, the assembly identified the conserve rightism in the May Fourth Directive as the mistake nationwide. The criticism on the settling-accounts campaign of the northeast bureau was resonated in the national assembly. It was argued that the former campaigns protected the interests of the landlord class and failed to mobilize the peasants to support the land redistribution project.²⁷ As a result, the final production of the national assembly—the Basic Law—aimed to correct the mistakes of the rightist capitulationism. The Basic Law also declared equal land redistribution among villagers, and all belongings of the landlords were now subjected to confiscation.

²⁵ “Dongbeiju guanyu jiejie ‘banshengbushu’ yu zhunbei chungeng de zhishi” [The northeast bureau’s directive to solve the “half-cooked” problem and to prepare for spring ploughing, 东北局关于解决“半生不熟”与准备春耕的指示] (1947/2/20), in Zhongguo de tudi gaige bianjibu (etc. eds.). 1988. *Zhongguo tudi gaige shiliao xuanbian*, pp.341-343.

²⁶ See Chang Wenyu, 1984, “Suixian de tudi gaige”, pp.114-115.

²⁷ See Liu Shaoqi, “Zai quanguo tudi huiyi shang de jielun” (1947/09/13)

The basic law was formulated on the basis of identification and correction of the mistakes in the previous settling-accounts campaigns, which echoed the rectification campaigns launched by the northeast bureau. Therefore, when the equal redistribution campaign was launched in the north mountain base in the fall of 1947, the radical tone of the first rectification campaign in the winter of 1946 was continued by endorsing a dreadful struggle against the landlords.

Two months after the release of the Basic Law in September 1947, the north-mountain base initiated equal land redistribution. Within two months, the equal redistribution campaign swept over the villages that had been turned over by the settling-accounts campaign and the following rectification. The big landholders in the north-mountain base had already lost a great amount of their fortune in the previous campaign, and this time they were ordered to give out everything they had.²⁸ The village rich was put under house arrest. All of their possessions, including their valuables, were confiscated and then handed to the village poor. According to the basic law, the landlords should have an equal portion like other villagers. However, in most cases, these former powerful men just lost everything, and nothing was left for them. Under such circumstances, some big landholders violently resisted the redistribution project. According to a working report reviewing the problems of the equal redistribution campaign, some furious landlords murdered five local cadres and village activists in the north-mountain base.²⁹ However, such bloody retaliation of the landlords did not stop the

²⁸ Local archive, BWX19480120, “‘Suixian’ liangyuelai pingfen tudi yundong de jiandan zongjie” [The summary of the equal redistribution campaign in these two months, “绥县” 两月来平分土地运动的简单总结], written by Suixian xianwei.

²⁹ Local archive, BWX194805, “Tudi pingfen yudong zhong fasheng de yixie wenti”.

violence against them. On the contrary, the attacks against the landlords became more brutal.

In the first several months after the release of the basic law, the communists took a laissez-faire attitude on the violent attacks on the landlords. The national assembly just criticized the moderate treatment of the landlords in the previous campaign, and urged local governments to correct such mistakes. Therefore, in the equal redistribution campaign, the county committee never tried to stop the violence in the north-mountain base. The county officials recorded that in one village a kid from a landlord family was chased and beaten by some poor kids before he was forced to take off his clothes.³⁰ Moreover, in order to mobilize the villagers against their rich fellow villagers, a specific technique, “to sweep the village” (*sao tangzi*), was employed: a group of peasants from one village was organized by the county officials to direct the campaign in another village. After some village activists were murdered by the landlords from their own village, the county officials preferred such sweeping in later campaigns.³¹ The county officials would organize a group of peasants from one village, and then sent them to a village where the struggle session had been scheduled. These strangers were present at the struggle sessions, and they did not show any mercy to the landlords. As a result, the cruel struggles against the landlords always dominated the equal land redistribution campaign. Moreover, the technique “to sweep the village” also caused great tensions among villages. The hatchet men were not allowed to take anything back to their own village, but they still could take advantage from the village they swept. Some complaints

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Local archive, BWX19480120, “Suixian liangyuelai pingfen tudi yundong de jiandan zongjie”

were recorded: “the group who were supposed to help us ate up several hundred pounds of rice and seven pigs.”³²

Such turbulence in the north-mountain base near Beiwan was prevalent over the communist bases during the equal redistribution campaign. Thousands of miles away, in the northwestern bases, the peasants experienced the similar unrest. After the communist central committee was driven out of their stationed place by the nationalists, Xigou was chosen as their shelter right. As a result, the equal redistribution campaign was carried out very hastily in Xigou. The struggle session was called off, immediately after some central officials saw the Ma landlords were being beaten.³³ However, the violent struggles in villages near Xigou still disturbed the villagers as well as the central officials. Soon the turbulence in the equal redistribution campaign was identified as the result of leftist mistakes, and a new rectification was proposed by the central committee.³⁴

In early 1948, the communists started to review the equal redistribution campaigns in their bases. Radical leftist mistakes had been identified, and correction campaigns were going to be launched. However, in both the Xigou base and the north-mountain base, rectifications on the leftist mistakes of the equal redistribution were barely carried out. The early 1948 was a crucial time for the communists in the battlefields with the nationalists. The communist troops had gradually prevailed over the nationalist, and were to take over entire China. After listing the problems of the equal redistribution campaign and exploring the causes of the mistakes, a reviewing report from

³² Local archive, BWX194805, “Tudi pingfen yudong zhong fasheng de yixie wenti”.

³³ From interview, XG200001122LZY..

³⁴ Mao Zedong, 1991, “Guanyu muqian dang de zhengce zhong de jige zhyao wenti” [On several important problems in our policies, 关于目前党的政策中的几个重要问题] (1948/1/18), in *Mao Zedong xuanji*, pp.1268-1270.

the north-mountain base in May 1948 stated: “Now to prepare against the war is our important task.”³⁵ Later that month, Changchun, one of the biggest cities in northeast China, was besieged by the communist troops. The siege lasted over one hundred and fifty days, and the number of casualties was over hundreds of thousands. Under such circumstances, rectifications in the communist bases, especially in the northeast bases like the north-mountain, had to make place for the preparations against the War, such as recruiting new soldiers and collecting grain for the army.

3. The liberated Beiwan

The turbulent land reform in the communist north-mountain base did not have much influence on Beiwan, a coast village which was located next to a railway station and the major road connecting the pass of Shanhaiguan and the cities in northeast China. After the Japanese were defeated and the communists had withdrawn to the mountain base, the nationalist troops firmly controlled Beiwan. A platoon of nationalist soldiers stationed in a fort one mile away from Beiwan. A police station established in 1906 stood right in the middle of the village. While the peasants in the communist north-mountain base experienced the turbulence of land distribution and rectification campaigns, Beiwan villagers directly felt the pressure of the ongoing war between the nationalists and the communists.

During the Japanese occupation, a number of village youth in Beiwan worked as apprentices in cities and towns. In addition, there were also several households whose members ran their own big or small business out of the village. The pressure of the civil

³⁵ Local archive, BWX194805, “Tudi pingfen yudong zhong fasheng de yixie wenti”.

war led to a significant drop in business activities. Wang Zhun had been working in a cloth shop in Shenyang for four years, and he noted that the business had been turned dreadful since the last months of the Japanese occupation. “In the following several months, most of time, our store only opened for business in the morning, and the manager was ready to order us to close the shop anytime.”³⁶ Wang Zhun, as well as most of the village youth, was laid off and had to return home. Finally the siege of the city Changchun from May to September 1948 shocked Beiwan. “After the communist troops began to surround Changchun, food supply was cut off.” Guo Yezhun and several relatives were vegetable peddlers in the city of Changchun. “My cousins and I managed to sneak out, and it took us two months to walk back home.”³⁷ The miserable situation of Changchun drove all villagers from cities and towns back to Beiwan, including the two richest landholders.

The news brought back by the returning villagers must have disturbed the village. However, the brutal war was not just some stories happening in remote places. Beiwan villagers had already sensed the tension of the war around. “About once every ten days, every household was required to send one man to construct some reinforcement for the fort close to the railroad.” Yang Zhengxin, who was fourteen years old in 1948 and was the eldest son of his widowed mother, has vivid memories about the platoon stationed nearby. “Sometimes we were even ordered to patrol around the fort at night, because the nationalist soldiers did not want to take the risk themselves.”³⁸ Beiwan villagers might

³⁶ From interview, BW20060731WZ.

³⁷ From interview, BW200607201GYZ.

³⁸ From interview, BW200607252YZX.

have heard about the land redistribution projects in the communist base. However, even the great chaos in the north-mountain area could not compare with the direct threats from the civil war. On the one hand, the villagers had to cope with the demands from the nationalist troops, including possible conscriptions. On the other hand, many households had lost a great amount of their income. With the return of family members, the money from the cities were cut off. “What worried the village was not land reform but the war.” Wang Zhun was twenty-four-year old, of a small landholder family. However, he believed even the two biggest landholders, Wei Deshan and Zhao Fenyou, shared the same thoughts with him. Neither Wei nor Zhao tried to sell some land they owned even after they shut their big business off in big cities.³⁹

In the fall of 1948, communist troops successfully took over all big cities, and drove the nationalists out of northeast China. About ten days after the Chinese mid-autumn festival (September 17), Beiwan villagers witnessed the retreat of multitudinous nationalist soldiers. The platoon stationed in the fort next to Beiwan withdrew into the pass of Shanhaiguan, and the police station in the village became empty. In the following two months, Beiwan was still permeated by tension of war, till the communists finally opened the gate of Shanhaiguan, ten miles south of the village. However, the communists had already stepped into Beiwan, and land redistribution had been on the agenda of the communists. The northeast bureau proposed to solve the land problem in the later-liberated area before the spring of next year.⁴⁰

³⁹ From interview, BW19980711WZ.

⁴⁰ “Dongbeiju guanyu xinqu tugai de zhishi” [The directives on land reform in the later-liberated area from the northeast bureau, 东北局关于新区土改的指示] (1948/11/12), in *Zhongguo de tudi gaige bianjibu* (etc. eds.), 1988, *Zhongguo tudigaige shiliao huibian*, p.566.

In the long-term base Xigou, before the land reform project was launched, the communists spent years to set up village organizations and recruit party members. Now the land reform projects were scheduled in Beiwan, the later-claimed territory of the communists, within three months. Therefore, the first task for the communists was to identify village leaders and then to build up village organizations, especially a village administration. In early October, right after the county committee had set up sixteen district governments, two district officials arrived in Beiwan. Wang Zhun, the village record keeper during the land reform period, believed that these two were not complete strangers to Beiwan. “One of them was from the north-mountain base, and was related to the Wang clan. The other might have studied in the same school with someone from the village.”⁴¹ The personal ties between the officials and some villagers made it easy for Beiwan to accept the presence of the two officials, and some villagers even to help them select the new village functionaries. “These two officials visited several households, including mine. They asked us to name someone who was poor but not completely illiterate.” Zhao Zhengxin, who helped the two district officials, was later appointed as the head of the village militia. “Before they made the nomination, the two officials talked to the persons named by others.”⁴²

After the two district officials spent a few days to talk to the villagers, Hu Yueqian, a middle-age man, was chosen as the new village head. Nowadays, the image of this first village leader was quite obscure in the village. The villagers all praised that Yueqina had a very nice personality, but probably too nice. “Yueqian could read and

⁴¹ From interview, BW199807111WZ.

⁴² From interview, BW199807102ZZX.

write, but not very well.” Wang Zhun, the long term village accountant, remembered that Yueqian was from a middle-level peasant family and must have got some education. “I think Yueqian spent his whole life in the village, and he never worked in the cities.”⁴³ Wang Zhun believed that the two district officials prefer to choose those who did not spend long time in the cities. It was not difficult to find an educated middle-age man in Beiwan, but it was not so easy to locate someone who never “stained” by the cities. Although Hu Yueqian’s health was not very good, the two officials insisted to choose him as the head.

The rest functionaries of the village government (*cun gongsuo*) were all nominated by Yueqian. Yueqian and the two district officials must have thought about to make a balance among the four big clans in the village. The five core members of the village government were from different family, and only the assistant head was illiterate. The village government was established in a hurry, but it did function while cadres from the county and the district were constantly sent to help. “One month after we were put into the positions, we brought out a complete name list of the adults in the village. We were ordered to enlist three people to join the service group for the communist troops, and we recruited four.” Wang Zhun was proud of the work they had done.⁴⁴

According to the directive from the northeast bureau, the land reform should be scheduled before the coming spring. A campaign to reform the levy collection provided a chance for the new village functionaries to warm up. In order to provide fund for local constructions, the communists also relied on collecting levies from the village, like the

⁴³ From interview, BW199807111WZ.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Japanese and the nationalists. “Before levies were assigned to persons and every one paid the same amount. Now the communists proposed to divide the levies by household, and each household was going to pay an equal amount.”⁴⁵ As the village record keeper, Wang Zhun knew well about the importance of the levy collecting. The first levy collected by the new village functionaries built a village elementary school, and each household was asked to pay twenty *jin* (22 pounds) of sorghum. However, in this post-war period, this amount might still be a burden for most households, until one of the big landholders stood up to help the villagers out. “Zhao Fende told the district officials that he would like to pay the whole amount of the first levy.” A cousin of Zhao Fende recalled. “In addition, Fende provided seventy sets of desks and chairs for the school. He also gave out twenty thousands *jin* (22,000 pound) of grain to the villagers who did not have enough food to eat.”⁴⁶

The friendly Zhao Fende did help a great number of Beiwan villagers. However, his kindness might have deprived the later-established village government its only chance to face each villager before the land redistribution. The land redistribution project had been on the communists’ schedule. The Beiwan project was launched after two rectification campaigns had been carried out in the north-mountain base. Was the reform in Beiwan going to benefit from the lessons of the north-mountain area?

II. A Land Reform after Rectifications

1. Training for the redistribution

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ From interview, BW199807101YX.

Before their takeover, the communists hardly had any connection with the later-liberated areas. These areas were captured from the nationalists, who were still in the battlefields with the communists. In order to win the on-going war, the communists had to establish a stable and efficient administration over their later-claimed rear areas. Based on their experiences in the base areas, the communists were confident that land reform would help them to build up power over their later-claimed territories. However, at the same time, the communists knew well that land reform in the new areas should not be carried out in haste. “We should not attempt to complete land reform within a few months, but should be ready to spend two or three years on that.”⁴⁷ It seems that this slow-pace plan was not going to work out in the northeast China though. One month after the communists took over Beiwan, they started another big campaign with the nationalist troops around Beijing, just 200 miles away. Under such circumstances, the northeast bureau did not obey the central committee’s slow-pace plan. Instead, the bureau proposed to complete land reform within a few months.

In Beiwan, finally chose as soon as village government was set up in the winter of 1948, the land redistribution project was set on track. “In our village, rent-reduction was never carried out. No villager was party members before the land reform, either.” In Hu Yuequan’s view, Beiwan just jumped into the land redistribution. “Two members of the new village government were sent to attend a training camp. When they came back with a work-team two or three weeks later, we knew that the land reform was going to start.”⁴⁸

⁴⁷ “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu xin jiefangqu tudi gaige yaodian de zhishi” [The directives on land reform in the later-liberated area, 中共中央关于新解放区土地改革要点的指示], in Mao Zedong. 1991. *Mao Zedong xuanji*, vol. 4. pp.1283-1284.

⁴⁸ From interview, BW199807092HYQ.

In the later-liberated areas like Beiwan, the communists lacked sufficient organization for the routine administrative work, such as levy collecting. Based on the communist experience in their base areas, sending a work-team to villages had proved to be an efficient way for the communists to put their policies in effect.⁴⁹ In the land reform of Xigou, work teams had directed the process of the settling-account campaign. If a work-team that comprised of experienced revolutionaries could go to the village to assist the land reform directly, the reform might be carried out exactly following the communists' blueprint.

However, the experienced officials, who knew well about the party's policies and then could successfully complete their task even in a strange village, were in short supply, especially after the communists just took over the broad northeast China recently. Therefore, the northeast bureau proposed to hold short-term training camps for the village leaders from both their former bases and the later-liberated areas.⁵⁰ A report of the communist county committee wrote down the curriculum of the training camp. The students studied the Basic Agrarian Law and other directives related to land reform from the central committee and the northeast bureau. Moreover, "the cadres who participated in the land reform in the base areas came to introduce their experiences." The review on the land reform projects in the north-mountain bases was an important part of the training. "The mistakes occurring in the north-mountain base were also brought into discussion, in

⁴⁹ Oi, Jean. 1989, *State and Peasant in Contemporary China: the political economy of village government*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

⁵⁰ "Dongbeiju guanyu xinqu tugai de zhishi" (1948/11/12), in *Zhongguo de tudi gaige bianjibu* (etc. eds.). 1988. *Zhongguo tudigaige shiliao huibian*, p.566.

order to help the trainees to learn some lessons.”⁵¹ As a matter of fact, the land reform in the later-liberated area was started from the correction of the mistakes of the former campaigns in the base areas.

Since mid-January 1949, the trainees graduated from the training camps, together with the experienced cadres, were sent to the later-liberated villages. “The party secretary of our district was the head of the work-team to our village.” According to Zhao Zhengxin, the head of the village militia in the land reform period, most of the work-team members were from the north-mountain bases. “There were also a few young students, whose family lived nearby.”⁵² The members of the work-team had received adequate training, and their capabilities had been recognized by the government. “Before the work teams were sent out, all the members had been put under scrutiny. Those who were from landlord families were dismissed, as well as those who were not devoted to the land reform.”⁵³ The training the work-team members went through was a “disciplinary” process which was aimed to select qualified personnel to be in charge of the land reform. The training camp was in fact the field for the communists to carry out the disciplinary training. Now these work-team members, who were once the objects of a disciplinary power, received adequate training and education, and were going to work as the help-hands of the county government. Which kind of trainings would they bring to the village?

2. To classify the villagers

⁵¹ Local archive, BWX194903, “Xinqu tugai qingkuang” [The messenger on the land reform in later-liberated area, 新区土改情况], written by Sui county committee.

⁵² From interview, BW199807102ZZX.

⁵³ Chang Wenyu, 1984, “Suixian de tudi gaige”, pp.118-119.

According to the order from the northeast bureau, the land reform project should be completed before the spring ploughing. When the work-team led by the district secretary came to Beiwan, it was already mid January. At that time, Beiwan had been controlled by the communist for about three months. The village leaders had been selected, and the village functionaries were doing their job. However, there was still no later-recruited party member. Moreover, most of the villagers had not been in any contact with the communists, not to mention to be incorporated into the new state. The work-team members must have felt that time was tight for them. However, by the training they received, the work-team members were able to carry out their work step by step.

The first task for the work-team in Beiwan was to differentiate the villagers into class categories. The classification of the villagers was the most important and also most difficult part of the land redistributions. On the one hand, all land reform policies were based on the differentiations of different classes. The first directive of land reform, the May Fourth Directive, highlighted distinct treatments of different classes: “attitudes for treating the medium and small landlords should be differentiated from attitudes for treating the big landlords, bad gentry, and evil tyrants.”⁵⁴ Therefore, the land redistribution was possible only after the class status of each villager was identified.

On the other hand, it was tricky to put each villager into a correct class category. Complicated calculation was involved to determine the socio-economic status of each

⁵⁴ “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu qingsuan jianzu ji tudi wenti de zhishi” (1946/5/4) in *Jiefang zhanzheng shiqi tudi gaige wenjian xuanbian (1945-1949)*, p.2. The English translation is from “The May Fourth Directives on settling-accountss, rent reduction, and land” in *The People’s Republic of China: a Documentary History of Revolutionary Change*, p.211.

household. In the correspondences between the central committee and the regional bureaus, a significant portion focused how to do the calculation. In January 1949, the central committee sent out at least three directives to some regional bureaus on the issues such as how to calculate the incomes of a landlord and whether the income from the sidelines should be taken into account.⁵⁵ Beside the complicated calculation, a person's political attitudes also mattered in the classification, which was already stated in the above quotation from the May Fourth Directives: the big landlords were listed together with bad gentry, and evil tyrants.⁵⁶

It is not surprising that during the former land reform campaigns in the base areas, many mistakes in the classification occurred. To solve the problem, in May 1948, the central committee reissued two specific guidelines to make the criteria clearer. Moreover, the northeast bureau believed that during the radical equal redistribution campaign in 1948, too many households were targeted in struggle. To ensure that the land reform in the later-liberated areas would be carried out correctly, the north bureau made it clear that no more than ten percent of the population should be targeted.⁵⁷ To the Beiwan work

⁵⁵ A 1933 directive on how to differentiate the classes was reissued by the central committee in May 1948. The calculation introduced in this directive must have been complicated enough to confuse most of the local cadres. According to this directive, to calculate the duration and degree of a rich peasant's exploitation, the incomes of the household in three continuous years should be taken into account, as well as the consumption of the household in this period. "Guanyu tudi douzhengzhong yixie wenti de jueding" [Decisions concerning some problems Arising from Agrarian Reform, 关于土地斗争中一些问题的决定] in Zhongyang dang'anguan [中央档案馆] (ed.), 1981, *Jiefang zhanzheng shiqi tudi gaige wenjian xuanbian (1945-1949)*, pp. 327-344. The three directives discussing the exact calculation could be found in *Zhongguo tudi gaige shiliao xuanbian*, pp.576-577.

⁵⁶ In another 1933 directive which were reissued to clarify some misunderstandings on the class differentiation, it still states, "the bad gentry and evil tyrants who were rich peasants should be treated in the same manner as a landlord." "Zenyang fenxi nongcun jieji" [How to analyze Class status in the country side, 怎样分析农村阶级], in *Maozedong xuanji*, vol. 1: pp.127-129.

⁵⁷ "Dongbeiju guanyu xinqu tugai de zhishi" (1948/11/12), in Zhongyang dang'anguan (ed.). 1981. *Zhongguo tudigaige shiliao huibian*, p.566.

team, the number was fixed at less than eight percent of the households.⁵⁸

Before the Beiwan work-team came to the village, the village functionaries had already compiled a rough list to record the information for each household, such as the number of families and their ages.⁵⁹ This list might be helpful to the work team, but it was far from enough for them to classify the villagers. “The work-team members were divided into small groups, and they visited each house in the village.” The head of the village militia, Zhao Zhengxin, was requested to provide protection for the work-team, so he knew well about their working procedures.⁶⁰ “The work-team worked out a draft on the class status of each household, and they organized a series of meetings to discuss the draft. After that, the list was posted right outside the village government. Every villager could see the draft and make comments.” The village record keeper, Wang Zhun, still admires the efficiency of the work-team nowadays. “In my view, that draft of the classification was very accurate. Although there were some dissensions, they were just minor.”⁶¹

One of the controversies was related to Zhao Fende, one of the two big landholders in Beiwan. Zhao Fende made his fortune by running two well-known stores selling fur and leather clothing in Shenyang. Although his father only owned a small plot like most of the Beiwan villagers, Fende bought in about three hundred mu (about 50 acres) from his fellow villagers. Fende was a very kind and gentle person. Most of his lands were rented to the former owners of those plots, and his families were always ready

⁵⁸ Chang Wenyu, 1984, “Suixian de tudi gaige”, p.119.

⁵⁹ From interview, BW199807111WZ.

⁶⁰ From interview, BW199807102ZZX.

⁶¹ From interview, BW199807111WZ.

to lend a hand to other villagers. Right after the communist takeover, Zhao paid off the first levy the government required for the entire village. He also gave out twenty thousands *jin* (22,000 pound) of grain for free to help the villagers to overcome the shortage caused by the war.

Some villagers even believed that Zhao Fende's thoughts were very close to communism. The work-team celebrated the 1949 Chinese New year with the Beiwan villagers. The scrolls Zhao Fende put up on the gate of his house drew eyes of the entire village. Many villagers still have clear memories about those scrolls, which later became a part of the misery of Fende's family in the rectification campaign. In the scrolls, Fende stated that he would be glad to be the first household being confiscated as long as it was good for the village. Fende believed that he never treated his fellow villagers badly and thus he would not care about his class status.⁶²

There was also another fact that situated Fende in a relatively favorable position. Fende and his two wives with seven children lived together with his mother and his brother's family. Therefore, although Fende's household owned a great amount of land, the land owned per person was among the highest in the village. So Fende was labeled a rich peasant, instead of a landlord. Furthermore, due to his donation to the village, he was praised as an "enlightened figure" (*kaming renshi*) by the district government. As a result, Fende's properties other than land were not subjected to be confiscated. This might disappoint some poor people who wanted to get more clothes and other articles from redistribution, but it did not disturb the village.

⁶² Fende's cousin Yang Xin could recall the complete content of the scrolls. From interview, BW199807101YX. The first half is "对共产早有同心，只要有益人群，但愿穷人先分我", and the second half is "处乡里从无歧视，敢说无害社会，怎定成分且由他, with a horizontal scroll "自有民意".

It took the Beiwan work-team over a month to decide the class status of each household, and it was well accepted by the Beiwan villagers, even among those who were labeled as landlords and rich peasants. It might make the head of the work team, the secretary of the district, felt relieved. The district secretary supported a moderate land reform. The percentage of the struggle targets in the district turned out to be only 6.1 percent of the households, which was below the 8 percent standard made by the northeast bureau.⁶³ Among the 300-odd households, six were labeled as landlords and nine as rich peasants, both categories lower than the district average.⁶⁴

In land reform, the land ownership before was used to associate peasants with specific class labels. The class standings were used in the redistribution of land and other properties. Later on, the class labels shaped many people's life by defining the possible opportunities for each class. The communists might not intent to create a social hierarchy in the new state, and they emphasized that the landlord should be treat equally as the average villager. However, as what happened in the redistribution in Beiwan, as well as Xigou, no landlord got an equal quota as the average peasants. At this point, to differentiate the villagers into each class was the crucial part of land reform. When the class status of each household was identified, the rest part of land redistribution went on smoothly and rapidly.

“On Chinese calendar February 2, the work-team led us to enter the houses of the landlords, with drums beating.” Poor peasant Li Yuhai was impressed by the fun.⁶⁵

⁶³ Chang Wenyu, 1984, “Suixian de tudi gaige”, p.119.

⁶⁴ From interview, BW199807111WZ.

⁶⁵ From interview, BW200608011LYH.

Within twenty-five days, with the aid of the work team, the land in Beiwan had been redistributed, and now every Beiwan villager owned a plot of the same size. The cattle, houses, tools and articles for living that were confiscated from landlords and rich peasants were all distributed. The speed of Beiwan's redistribution project was actually not extraordinary. In the whole county, the average time of redistributing the land was twenty to thirty days.⁶⁶

3. To promote the activists

In order to put each Beiwan villager into a correct class category, the work-team made great efforts to analyze their socio-economic status. Consequently, the separation had led to the future differentiations in redistributing land and other properties. The class rank not only marked the differences among the villagers, but also granted them hierarchical social positions. According to the Basic Law, the leadership of land reform was endowed to the poor peasant group (*pinnong tuan*).⁶⁷ Only villagers who had no land or small land were allowed to be the leaders. The logic of differentiation was a basic principle of land reform. The intention to establish the differentiation among the villagers could be found not only in the efforts to associate people with different class labels, but also through the promotion of the local activists.

When the communists took over Beiwan, the communist party barely had any connections with any villager. In order to carry out routine administration, a village government was set up in a rush. The land reform project provided a chance for the

⁶⁶ Chang Wenyu, 1984, "'Suixian' de tudi gaige", p.119.

⁶⁷ "Zhongguo tudi fa dagang," in Zhongyang dang'anguan (ed.). 1981. *Jiefang zhanzheng shiqi tudi gaige wenjian xuanbian (1945-1949)*, p. 85.

county officials to observe the behaviors of the village leaders as well as other villagers. By assessing these behaviors, officials ranked villagers between good and bad by their attitudes, capabilities and potentials. Naturally, the activists, who followed the communist directives and took part in the redistribution campaign enthusiastically, would be ranked as good by the officials. In the same way as the villagers with good class background would be granted leadership, the activists would be promoted for their good behaviors.

Before the work-team left Beiwan, the district secretary had recommended five activists to become the party members.⁶⁸ All these five were well-behaved activists during the land redistribution. “I was in charge of public security during the land reform. The work-team was satisfied with my work.”⁶⁹ Zhang Zhengxin, the head of village militia at that time, knew well about his qualification. The head of the village, Hu Yeqian did not get the recommendation, which might be related about his poor health situation. But Yueqian’s illiterate assistant was nominated. The third nomination went to a newly-married young woman, who was the first female to make a public speech in Beiwan. The secretary’s preference for these three would not arouse unease in Beiwan. As for the other two, Poor Wang (*Qiong Wang*) and Poor Li (*Qiong Li*), things were different. These two guys had become provocative figures in the village even before they received the recommendations to become party members. Even today, when these two poor men are mentioned, most of the old Beiwan villagers who knew them do not hesitate to say bad words about them.

⁶⁸ From interview, BW199807083ZZX.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

“Poor Wang and Poor Li were not inhabitants of our village before. Right during the land reform, the district secretary allowed them to move here, and persuaded our villagers to accept them.” Zhao Fenyi revealed the secret of the unpopularity of Poor Wang and Poor Li.⁷⁰ “At the beginning, these two came to Beiwan as members of the work team.” The truth told by the intelligent village record keeper Wang Zhun was even more shocking.⁷¹ The families of Poor Wang and Poor Li lived in the north-mountain base. These two, who were in their mid-twenties, must be very active during the land reform campaigns there, and they were recruited as camp training work-team members for land reform in the later-liberated area, like Beiwan. Compared to Beiwan, the north-mountain area was unfertile and destitute. “Even the poorest in our village lived in a better condition than most of the north-mountain people.” Zhao Fenyi might be exaggerating the gap between the two villages, but his words tell at least part of the truth.⁷² As a former guerilla area, the north-mountain area is an isolated and remote place. Working in the barren mountain soil was almost the only way for the residents to make a living. On the contrary, Beiwan enjoyed fertile soil and mild weather, and fishing and working for businessmen brought considerable income for Beiwan residents.

The work-team members, Poor Wang and Poor Li, residents of the poor north-mountain, must have complicated feelings when they came to Beiwan, eating and living together with some Beiwan villagers. Poor Li’s son, who moved with his father and other families into Beiwan, still lives near Beiwan. He reveals something of his father.

⁷⁰ From interview, BW199807084ZFY.

⁷¹ From interview, BW199807111WZ.

⁷² From interview, BW199807084ZFY.

“The living conditions here were far better than the north-mountain. So my father asked the permission from the district secretary to stay here. He had been working for the revolution for years, and he should have the opportunity to enjoy a better life.”⁷³

It is not easy to judge whether Poor Li expressed his thoughts directly to the district secretary. At least, when the district secretary justified the stay of his teammates, the excuse he gave to Beiwan villagers was somewhat confused. “The district secretary said these two were not residents here and they would not reluctant to struggle the landlords. There would be no harm to take them in.”⁷⁴ The district secretary was a supporter of moderate land reform. Under his direction, the struggle sessions in Beiwan were relative peaceful. No record could trace out any violence. It was hard to believe that the secretary preferred the two poor because of their ruthlessness. Moreover, when Poor Wang and Poor Li made the request, the redistribution was almost done, and the land reform project was believed to have drawn to a conclusion. Even though Poor Wang and Poor Li were helpful at struggle sessions, they might not get many chances to do that. In addition, Poor Wang and Poor Li all had several kids, and the two families, about ten persons in total, were going to move into Beiwan. The land and the houses had already been distributed to Beiwan villagers, and the secretary had to persuade some villagers to give out rooms and land to Poor Wang and Poor Li. If there was no absolute necessity, it was hard to believe that the district secretary would approve Poor Wang and Poor Li’s applications.

The only evidence that would help to access the consideration of the district

⁷³ From interview, BW199807141LSZ.

⁷⁴ From interview, BW199807111WZ.

secretary might be his introduction about his two former teammates to the Beiwan villagers. The secretary must have emphasized the poverty of these two. As a result, these two got their nicknames, while their real names were forgotten by most of the villagers. Of course, poverty by itself could not be enough. There were thousands of poor people in the north-mountain area, who would be glad to move to Beiwan, where the land is more productive and transportation is more convenient.

It was because Poor Wang and Poor Li were activists in the communist land reform that they got the chance to change the lives of their families. Their enthusiasm for the land reform campaigns in the north-mountain base made them qualified to work in Beiwan. And because of their devotion to the land reform in Beiwan, it became hard for the modest district secretary to reject their request. The “good” qualities of the activists ranked them over others, and it also qualified them for the generous reward. The promotion of the activists would encourage the activists themselves, and at the same time set the model for others.

The district secretary left Beiwan with his other work teammates in late-March, 1949. Conforming to the north bureau’s command, land redistribution in Beiwan drew to a conclusion before the spring ploughing. The villagers had their class status, and could enjoy the rights entitled to their class. The activists had got promoted, and they could serve as the hard core for future work. Now everything had been set for the season of production.

III. The Rectifications Again

Before the communists launched the land reform project in Beiwan in the winter

of 1948, two rectification campaigns had been carried out. In the fall of 1947, a rectification campaign targeted the conservative settling-accounts; a second rectification was launched in the spring of 1948 to fight against the radical equal redistribution. The influences of the former rectifications were profound to the land reform campaign in Beiwan. The tones of the directives from the central committee and the north east bureau were relatively mild, which even led to a call on a lower quota of the landlord households for each village. The lessons from the north mountain base were also references for local cadres. In the training camp of the work team, both the positive and negative aspects of the conservative settling-accounts campaign and the radical equal redistribution campaign had been brought into discussion. In addition, the heads of the Beiwan work-team took part in the former two campaigns in the north mountain base. Their own experiences helped the cadres to be cautious at possible problems and mistakes. Therefore, the land redistribution campaign in the later-liberated area like Beiwan was based on critical reviews of the mistakes identified from the previous campaigns. The land redistribution campaign in Beiwan itself was the rectification efforts to correct mistakes in the previous campaigns in the base areas.

During this time period, the communists gradually gained victories in the battlefield with the nationalists. Their troops had marched to the Yangtze River, and almost took half of the Chinese territory. The central committee seemed satisfied with the land reform in the later-liberated areas. The directives they issued to the local bureaus reiterated the moderate tone in carrying out land reform.⁷⁵ Under such

⁷⁵ “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu xinqu nongcun gongzuo de zhishi”[The directives on the rural works in the later-liberated areas, 中共中央关于新区农村工作问题的指示], in *Zhongyang dang’anguan* (ed.), 1981. *Zhongguo tudi gai ge shiliao xuanbian*, p.594.

circumstance, the county government also expressed their satisfaction with the land redistribution campaigns in the later-liberated area like Beiwan. The county committee was also happy at their achievements: “In the main, the tasks of land reform are completed,” and “the masses have been devoted to the production enthusiastically.”⁷⁶ Of course, the county committee was aware that their mission was still incomplete: “the feudal institution has not been completely torn down, and the authority of our backbone has not been established.”⁷⁷ However, the county committee did not have many complaints on the moderate land redistribution. On the contrary, the county committee believed that the moderate policies “held the majority of the villagers together with us” and “isolated the landlords and feudal rich peasants.”⁷⁸

In July 1949, two months after the county committee made a positive review on the land reform in the later-liberated areas, the county committee addressed some worries in another report. “We were too eager to distribute the land in the spring, and did not really tear down the influence of the landlords and rich peasants.”⁷⁹ This statement was followed by some remarks made by the landlords and rich peasants after the land redistribution campaign. The majority of these remarks were some brutal words about the on-going war or the land reform. Some sabotage, such as to cut down trees, was also recorded in the report. The damages were minor, compared to the brutal attacks on the

⁷⁶ Local archive, BWX19490520, “Xinqu tugai zongjie” [The summary on the land reform in later-liberated area, 新区土改总结], written by the county committee.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Local archive, BWX19490709, “Dizhu funing fandong huidaomen pohuai de qingkuang ji women dui qi zhenya daji qingkuang” [The demolition from landlords, rich peasants, and the secret societies and our reactions 地主富农反动会门破坏的情况及我们对其镇压打击情况], written by the county committee.

cadres in the land reform project of the north-mountain base.

In that angry report, the county committee also pointed out that “some landlords, rich peasants and middle peasants lodged complaints against the village leaders, and the complaints were always based on some faked crime.”⁸⁰ In Summer 1949, Beiwan was disturbed by such a complaint from a rich peasant against Poor Wang. That bold rich peasant, Zhao Haishan, was a well-educated Chinese traditional doctor. Haishan’s son was a communist soldier who died in the war in early 1949. Li Yushan, who endorsed Haishan’s petition at that time, still insisted that Haishan did not have any personal conflicts with Poor Wang. “Haishan’s youngest son was a revolutionary martyr. Even if Poor Wang did not like Haishan, Poor Wang did not dare to do any harm to Haishan. Poor Wang is really a bad man. That’s the reason why Haishan wrote the petition.”⁸¹

Seventeen households signed the petition against Poor Wang, including two poor peasants and the first village head, Hu Yueqian. How bad could the activist Poor Wang could be? Although he did not sign the petition, Zhao Zhengxin, head of the village militia, was not reluctant to express his disdain for Poor Wang. “The peasant association held a meeting to elect a new village head. Poor Wang locked the door of the meeting place, and said he would not unlock it unless he was elected as the new leader.”⁸² Poor Wang succeeded, and as soon as he was in the position for a month, the villagers knew that they opened the door for a wolf. “Poor Wang asked the villagers, not only the landlords but also the poor peasants, to submit what he liked to the village government,

⁸⁰ Local archive, BWX19490709, “Dizhu funing fandong huidaomen pohuai de qingkuang ji women dui qi zhenya daji qingkuang”.

⁸¹ From interview, BW199807091LYS.

⁸² From interview, BW199807083ZZX.

and then he would just take them back to his own house.” Xu Guiyue is a very kind old lady, but her hater toward t Poor Wang remains strong and clear. “He even tried to take advantages from one of my cousins.”⁸³ Based on the accounts of the villagers, it seems that the communists did make some mistakes by promoting such a man.

In October 1949, the communists declared the establishment of the People’s Republic in Beijing, which means that the communists would launch their project to build a new state nationwide. If this ceremony did not impress Beiwan villagers, the first county congress of the party one month later must have had. In November 1948, the county committee decided to launch an examination campaign on the previous land reform to solve the problem left by the previous land redistribution campaign.⁸⁴

In mid-December 1949, a new work-team was sent to Beiwan to carry out the examination. After spending two weeks in Beiwan, the work-team made the judgment that the land redistribution campaign in last winter was incomplete. “The work-team told us that there were some hiding landlords and rich peasants who plotted to sabotage the happy life after the land redistribution.” He Dewu’s father was one of the two poor peasants who signed the petition against Poor Wang. Of course, he could not agree with the work team. “They even said that the petition against Poor Wang was totally nonsense, and the households who signed it were either landlords or their running dogs.”⁸⁵ The county government had identified the “mistakes.” But the Beiwan villagers must believe that the county government had mis-identified the “mistakes.” Anyway, it was the time

⁸³ From interview, BW199807181XGY.

⁸⁴ Local archive, BWX198007, “Zhonggong suixian diyici daibiao dahui jianjie” [The summary on the first 中共绥县第一次代表大会简介], compiled by Sui county archive.

⁸⁵ From interview, BW200608041HDW.

for the county government to correct the mistakes they had made.

Poor Wang was safe during the rectification campaign. The renowned doctor, Zhao Haishan, who wrote the petition, was now labeled as an “evil tyrant”. Poor Wang tortured Haishan publicly in a struggle session. Although Haishan’s son was a revolutionary martyr named by the communists, Haishan had to could not do anything when he was humiliated by poor Wang. Haishan died two years later, and the villagers still believed that his death was caused by the rectification campaign. In order to beat down those who tried to challenge Poor Wang and the new order Wang represented, the work-team changed the class status of some villagers. Six of twelve rich peasants were re-identified as landlords, and three middle peasants were upgraded to rich peasants.

Among the nine households whose class statuses were changed, eight signed on the petition against Poor Wang. The household of the former “enlightened figure” Zhao Fende was among the six new landlords. When Haishan wrote the petition against Poor Wang, Fende was visiting some old business partner in city, and his brother signed for him. It is said that as soon as Fende knew about the petition he decided to move back to the city. Fende must make the plan very carefully, and at that time Zhao was still an “enlightened figure”, which must help him to get the adequate documents. On morning, the villagers found out that Fende had left for the city with his second wife and four of his children. The rectification campaign had not been launched at that time, so the villagers, probably as well as Poor Wang, must think it was just a regular visit to some friends in cities again. However, when the rectification campaign started, the Beiwan villagers must get to know Fende’s foresight. Finally, when Poor Wang broke into Fende’s house to confiscate Fende’s treasure, hardly anything left. The Beiwan villagers are still happy

to talk about this failure of Poor Wang. Fende became a hero, because he was the only one that was not fooled by Poor Wang but fooled Poor Wang instead.⁸⁶

It is obvious that during the 1949 rectification campaign, the communists did not agree with Beiwan villagers on what should be regarded as problems and what were the mistakes they made. According to Beiwan villagers, Poor Wang was the origin of all the trouble. However, the work-team and the county committee believed that the unrest of the village was because of the hiding landlords. Probably the important issue is not who made the correct judgment, the villagers or the county committee. For the county government, through identifying mistakes and correcting them, they defeated the challenge to their authority and provided people with the judgment about what was correct. For the Beiwan villagers, they could do nothing, except to accept the standard made by the communists and keep silent. Before the rectification, some of the villagers had tried to voice themselves through criticizing Poor Wang. After the rectification, Haishan's story told the villagers that any attempt to challenge the judgment of the communists was not a good idea. If the communists had not established their authority in the village through the land redistribution campaign, the rectifications helped them to achieve their goal. It was through the identification and correction of mistakes of the previous campaign that the communists finally validated its pedagogic role over local communities.

About two years later, Poor Wang was dismissed from his position by the district government, and one of his assistants was sent to the battlefields in Korea. However, the district government never related Wang's dismissal with the rectification campaign. "The

⁸⁶ From interview, BW199807083ZZX.

district officials just said that Poor Wang was incompetent.”⁸⁷ Li Shuangzhong, Poor Li’s son, made the comments. Poor Li moved into Beiwan with Poor Wang after the land redistribution. So the two families were very close. Li Shuangzhong knew something about the uncle Wang and his own father. “My father did not take a role in the controversies at all. Our families just wanted to live our life here.” It seemed that the former activist Poor Li had valued the better life in Beiwan more than other things. Probably because of his sharp divergence from Poor Wang, Poor Li was finally accepted by the Beiwan villagers.⁸⁸

And after being removed from his position, Poor Wang chose to live with a relative in a village in another province. The district government provided him all the required documents. “The district official must feel relief at Poor Wang’s leave.”⁸⁹ Wang Zhun believed. Wang Zhun was one of the first party members in Beiwan. After Poor Wang was purged, the activists from previous campaigns, like Wang Zhun, were appointed as the new village leaders by the district government. However, nowadays the Beiwan villagers still believe that Haishan, the renowned doctor who wrote the petition and were tortured by Poor Wang, must still feel grieved.⁹⁰ Till today, no official statement has acknowledged that Haishan’s complaint toward Poor Wang was right and Haishan has been mistreated in the rectification campaign. After the communists had consolidated their control over the area, the important thing in the rectifications probably was not to put things right, but to fight back any challenge toward their authority and the

⁸⁷ From interview, BW199807141LSZ.

⁸⁸ From interview, BW199807091LYS.

⁸⁹ From interview, BW199807111WZ.

⁹⁰ From interview, BW199807083ZZX.

new order they established.

IV. Discipline through the Rectifications

First and foremost, through launching land reform, Chinese communists claimed to overturn the land inequality in rural China. However, even examining the policies that the communists formulated for the land redistribution projects, it would turn out that the economic reform on land ownership was just a part of the communist land reform. To build up a new state at the grassroots level was a clear intention of the communists in their land reform campaigns. In the process to ground their power in the village, the communists paid special attention to identify and correct the mistakes occurring in the previous campaign. The rectification was a constant and sometime dominant topic of the land reform at the grassroots.

In the later-liberated Beiwan, the land reform project was carried out on the basis of two rectification campaigns in the communist base areas. In fact, when the land reform project was launched in Beiwan, the project itself was regarded as an effort to correct and avoid the previous mistakes. Local cadres, who directed the land redistribution project in the Beiwan area, went through the rectification campaigns in the nearby base. As a result, the policies were reformulated, and the lessons they learned from the previous campaign were used to train and educate the newly-recruited work-team members. During the land redistribution project in Beiwan, the work-team carefully differentiated the class status of the villagers, and also promoted the activists. In a relative orderly and peaceful way, the village was reorganized and the communists built up the village representatives.

However, when some Beiwan villager complained the new village leaders chosen by the communists, a rectification campaign was scheduled. However, instead of removing the corrupt cadre, the rectification campaign targeted the villagers who signed the petition against the new leader. The complaints were regarded as the challenges toward the new order set up by the communist. This rectification campaign revealed to the Beiwan villagers that the communists now were the judge who set up the standard for the correct and the wrong.

Through redistributing land, the communists successfully involved themselves with the village affairs directly. They decided the social status of a villager, and set up the village government as their representatives. However, their control over the village would not be thorough and complete, if the rectification campaign was absent. It was through the identification and correction of mistakes of the previous campaign that the communists finally validated its pedagogic role over local communities. While the communists identified mistakes and corrected them, the villagers began to learn how to behave themselves in this new state. The grassroots disciplinary practice of the communist state was carried out through the correction on the misconducts defined by the state.

Chapter Five

To Discipline the “New man”:

Land Reform in Nancun

But imagine all these out of the way, the flags and the bands, the fetters and compartments in the social stable, and you will see a new man appearing, the original man, intact and healthy in mind, soul and body.

---From *The French Revolution*¹

Since the promulgation of the May Fourth Directive in 1946, the communists had launched land redistribution project in their base areas over China, like Xigou. “Land to the tiller” was declared the principle to ensure peasants to obtain land from the landlords’. In Xigou, through the settling accounts campaign, the former landless peasants acquired land from the former privileged Ma landlord family. The landlords had lost their economic dominance, as well as their leading roles in political organizations and social life in the countryside. However, Xigou villagers did not follow the scheme set by the communists: a public struggle session targeting the landlords turned into an attack on local cadres.

The Xigou chaos was not unique. The following examination campaigns revealed that similar problems occurred in the base areas: the conflicts between the peasants and

¹ Taine, Hippolyte. 1962, *The French Revolution*. Vol 3, Gloucester, MA: P. Smith, p.26.

local cadres overshadowed the struggle against landlords.² Such problems were partially considered as the result of conservative policies, which protected the landlords and failed to mobilize the peasants.³ In October 1947, the communists released a new decree of land reform, The Basic Agrarian Law, to promote equal land redistribution and call on the mobilization of peasants to fight against landlords. As the rectification of the conservative May fourth directive, the implementation of the basic law radicalized land reform. Due to the direct intervention of the communist central committee, the village of Xigou did not suffer much from this radicalization. However, in other places such as the northeast base areas, the population that had been violently attacked even climbed to over 25 percent of the whole.⁴ In order to pacify the rash advance, the communists soon issued a series of directives to correct the radical mistakes. In land reform, the identification and correction of mistakes remained a constant topic. Correcting previous mistakes had not only become a driving force for the communist to formulate their policies, but also an approach to enforce disciplinary practices at the grassroots.

With the military victory over the nationalist troops since early 1948, the communists expanded the land reform project over the later-acquired areas. After two rectifications in the base areas, the communists knew well the difficulties they might meet in land reform. It was proposed that the redistribution campaign in the later-

² Liu Shaoqi, “Guanyu tudi huiyi gedi huibao qingxing ji jinhou yijian de baogao” (1947/8/4), in *Zhongguo tidi gaige shiliao xuanbian*, pp.71-79.

³ Liu Shaoqi, “Zai quanguo tudi huiyi shang de baogao jilu” (1947/09/13), in Liu, Shaoqi, 1981, *Liu Shaoqi xuanji*, volume 1, pp. 384-397.

⁴ Liu Shaoqi, “Guanyu dongbei tudi gaige zhong dajimian tai kuang de baogao” (1948/2/7), in *Zhongguo tidi gaige shiliao xuanbian*, p.159.

liberated areas should employ different strategies.⁵ Three months after the communists drove the nationalists out, Beiwan villagers set out on their equal land redistribution. The lessons from the land reform in the base areas influenced the policies set for the later-liberated areas, as well as the local cadres directing the land redistribution in Beiwan. In fact, the campaign in Beiwan itself could be regarded as a part of the rectifications. At this point, the rectifications functioned as a normalizing training over local communities when the communists endeavored to build up a new state at the grassroots.

Moreover, after the equal redistribution campaign had ended, like the procedures of land reform in the base areas, an examination (*fucha*) campaign was initiated to identify and correct the mistakes in Beiwan since late-1949. Again the conflicts between villagers and local cadres were regarded as challenges to the communist authority. Again the previous campaign was considered too moderate which “pampered the landlords and fostered the counteractions.” A “stern fight back” was then initiated as the rectification, which switched to violent attacks on the landlords.⁶ The land reform in Beiwan seemed to repeat the experience of Xigou.

In one sense, the two rectifications in the base area led to the moderate start of land reform in Beiwan. But after the communist authority was challenged by villagers, the Beiwan project could not avoid the switch to the radical policies. Similar policies were enacted in the first rectification campaign in the base areas and then became the

⁵ Mao Zedong, 1991. “Zai Butong diqu shishi tidifa de butong celue” [Different strategies in enacting the Basic Agrarian law in different areas, 在不同地区实施土地法的不同策略] (1948/2/3), in Mao Zedong, 1991, *Mao Zedong Xuanji*, vol. 4, p.1178. Mao Zedong, 1991. “Xin jiefangqu tudi gaige yaodian” [The outline of land reform in the later-liberated area, 新解放区土地改革要点] (1948/2/15), in Mao Zedong, 1991 *Mao Zedong Xuanji*, pp. 1283-1284.

⁶ Local archive, BWX19490709, “Dizhu funong fandong huidaomen pohuai de qingkuang ji women dui qi zhenya daji qingkuang”.

target of the second rectification. It seemed that the rectifications based on the projects in the base areas did not pave the road for later campaigns in the later-claimed territories. A correct road would not be set through identifying and correcting mistakes. Instead, the fight against mistakes imposed a normalizing training upon the countryside. Such training defined the mistakes and then reinforced the communists' role in creating or enacting norms on village affairs. Therefore, the constant rectifications enabled the communists to launch a disciplinary revolution over their territories.

The land reform in Beiwan was right around the time when the communists took over the whole country. On October 1, 1949, while the county government was planning their third rectification campaigns, a grand ceremony was held in Beijing. The establishment of the communist central government was announced, and the building-up of a nascent state, the People's Republic of China, was set in motion. The third village of this project, Nancun, was among the nationalist backbone areas, and the county site was finally taken by the communists just two days before the ceremony in Beijing.⁷

The inequality in land ownership in the newly-liberated area⁸ was still the focus

⁷ Before the final seizure of the county site on September 29, the communist guerilla controlled the Nancun area by persuading the county militia to revolt and cross over. However, the nationalist troops retreating from eastern China reclaimed the county site in July. In the following two months, the communists and nationalists claimed and then lost the control of the county site for one more round. Finally, in late September, after the main force of the communist troops arrived at the Nancun area in their march over south China, the nationalists were driven to the far south, with some remnants retreating to the mountain areas around. Liu Huanglin, 2002, "Wo qinli 'Xingxian' qiyi qianhou de yixie qingkuang" [My experiences before and after the insurgence of "Xing county", 我亲历 "兴县" 起义前后的一些情况], in *Xinxian wenshi heding ben* [The bound volume of Cultural and Historical materials in "Xing county", "兴县" 文史合订本], Vol. 6-10, pp.211-220. Luo Yahui, 2002, "'Xingxian' jiefang chuqi de qingfei fanba" [The cleaning-out-bandits and struggle-against-local-despots campaign in the first years after the liberation of "Xing county", "兴县" 解放初期的清匪反霸], in *Xinxian wenshi heding ben*, Vol. 6-10, pp.414-420.

⁸ In the communist documents, all areas that were taken over after the communist troops predominated the battlefield in early 1948 were referred to as "newly-liberated areas" (*xin jiefang qu*). The term was used to emphasize the differences between the newly-claimed territories and the communist base areas, where the

of the nascent communist state. On the same day when the communists finally took over the county site of the Nancun area, *The Common Program of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference* was enacted. Article three of this temporary constitution of the new state claimed: “The People's Republic of China must systematically transform the feudal and semi-feudal land ownership system into a system of peasant ownership.”⁹ Therefore, the nascent state would initiate the land redistribution project in Nancun sooner or later. By then, the communists had already launched three rectification campaigns in long-term base areas like Xigou and the later-claimed areas like Beiwan. What was going to happen in Nancun? The communists must have learned some lessons from the mistakes in different areas. A new policy would direct the land reform project in the newly-liberated areas, and the experiences in Xigou and Beiwan must have refined the communists’ techniques in mobilizing local people. Would it be possible for Nancun to be exempted from the rectification campaigns? If not, why were the rectifications called upon again? How did the rectification campaigns influence the village as well as the nascent state?

This chapter will start with a brief introduction of the history of Nancun and the village life before the communist take over. Strong clan organization characterized the village life of the prosperous Nancun. Moreover, being the home front of the nationalists

communists had built up grassroots organizations before the land reform was launched there. Beiwan was claimed by the communists in the fall of 1948, and Nancun in September 1949. Therefore, both are labeled “newly-liberated areas”. However, the land reform project was launched in Beiwan before the communists achieved nation-wide control. Nancun, as a place taken right before that, did not set out for land reform until a few years later. In order to highlight such different circumstances, the term “the newly-liberated areas” will be used to refer to places like Nancun, while the term “the later-liberated areas” is reserved for Beiwan and similar places.

⁹ Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi [中国人民政治协商会议], 1950, *Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi gongtong gangling* [The Common Program of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, 中国人民政治协商会议共同纲领], Beijing: Xinhua shudian.

for over twenty years, Nancun had been under the subtle but fundamental influences of the nationalist government. Following this introduction, this chapter then examines the communist preparation for the land reform projects. The communists not only worked on formulating new directives and bringing out new strategies at the top level, but also tried to build up its power in the village by setting up local organizations. Finally, as a part of the provincial experimental project (*shi dian*), the land reform campaign in Nancun unfolded systematically. However, like the experiences of Xigou and Beiwan, equal land redistribution was not the end of the land reform project. The examination and rectification campaigns were launched partly to fight against localism from the top level down to the grassroots. Through identifying and correcting mistakes, policymakers at the top, local executive officers, and villagers had all been involved in a disciplinary revolution, which gave birth to the “new-man,” the docile object of the new state power.

I. The Path toward Land Reform

1. A Village of “dead landlords”

Nancun locates far south from the communist state capital, Beijing. In the fall of 1949, the geographic distance of over 1,200 miles must have delayed the news about the grand ceremony of the nascent state to reach Nancun villagers. However, such distance would not derail the communists from their decision to turn the villagers upside down. The communists had already been equipped with some knowledge about the Nancun area from their experiences in the central base they established about 50 miles away from Nancun in 1930-1934. The top leader of the base, Mao Zedong, conducted several

surveys in the countryside,¹⁰ and he clearly perceived the prominent role of the clan organizations, which is also crucial to understand the village life of Nancun.

Before the arrival of the communists, Nancun had about six hundred households of the Hes, with around 40 households mainly from the Cai family.¹¹ Over forty percent of land in Nancun belonged to five sub-clans (*zhi*) of the Hes. According to a report by the communist district committee, these lands were actually listed under the name of their ancestors, some “dead landlords”.¹² The properties of these “dead landlords” provided some guarantees to fulfill the basic needs of their offspring. On the one hand, the members of each sub-clan had the priority to rent the lands. On the other hand, about fifty percent of the rents collected by the clan organizations would be finally dispatched to the households as a share from the clan celebration of several Chinese festivals or as the aid for special needs, such as wedding ceremonies and banquets for the new-borns.¹³ Moreover, the clans also provided education funds for the youth. In 1908, the He sub-clans from five villages nearby together set up a new-style school which was a combined elementary and middle school, in Nancun. The school opened to all the He young boys for free and provided some financial aids for each student.¹⁴

The capability of the He clan was also shown in their project to construct a

¹⁰ See “Xunwu diaocha” [The survey of Xunwu county, 寻乌调查] (1930/5) and “Xingguo diaocha” [The Survey of Xingguo county, 兴国调查] (1930/10), in Mao Zedong, 1982, *Mao Zedong nongcun diaocha wenji* [The collective of Mao Zedong’s surveys in countryside, 毛泽东农村调查文集], Beijing: Renmin chubanshe.

¹¹ From interview, NC200603033HSC.

¹² Local archive, NCQ19510123, “Baqu tugai gongzuo zongjie baogao”.

¹³ Ye Chaoqun and Zeng Yinxiang, 2000, “Jiefang qian ‘Baqu’ de ‘sidizhu’ ” [The dead landlords in “Ba” district before the liberation, 解放前 “坝区” 的 “死地主”], in “*Xinxian*” *wenshi heding ben*, Vol.1-5, pp.522-526.

¹⁴ From interview, NC200604021HST. From local archive, NCC200105: *Heshi zupu*, Vol.1, pp. 27-30.

country fair in Nancun. The town site was less than two miles away from Nancun, with just one village in-between. However, after a violent conflict with that village in the late 1880s, the way for the Hes to the town market was blocked. “The seniors of the clan got together and decided to construct a market street with stores on both sides.” He Shengtang is still proud of the decisions of his grandfathers. “Within a few years, the fair in our village became one of the best in the whole county.”¹⁵ To construct a market with over twenty stores required substantial investment. The success of the new fair in Nancun indicates the wealth of the He clan as well as its solidarity in defending themselves against assaults from outside.

The Hes’ decision to construct a fair also revealed the importance of the market for rural residents in this area. In his survey in a county fifty miles from Nancun, Mao Zedong noticed that, every year, about 300 thousand pounds of rice were transported from that county to the sub-region that Nancun belonged to.¹⁶ In order to feed themselves, Nancun villagers had to purchase rice from the inland market. On the other hand, the grain business also brought out a flourishing market in Nancun, providing villagers a lucrative opportunity. Located along the main road, the twenty shops owned by the sub-clans could serve the residents around as well as the dealers passing by.¹⁷ In addition, a great number of the villagers earned a part of their income through carrying goods for the dealers. Since the bloom of coal mines five miles north of Nancun in the

¹⁵ From interview, NC200604021HST.

¹⁶ Mao Zedong, 1982 “Xunwu diaocha” (1930/5), in *Mao Zedong nongcun diaocha wenji*, p.110.

¹⁷ The villagers recalled that among the twenty shops, there were two inns and one liquor store, as well as a Tofu shop, a dyehouse, and two grain shops. From interview, NC2006040033HST and NC200604041HZR.

late 1920s, the porters gained their earnings through transporting coals as well.¹⁸

Compared with Xigou and Beiwan, Nancun benefited a lot from the strong clan. In South China, the clan organization could provide various supports to their members from the basic living to education.¹⁹ In Nancun, the amount of the lands owned by the He clan even enabled them to run as a corporation.²⁰ As a result, Nancun was the wealthiest village among the three villages in this project. Moreover, the new-style school funded by the clan also created relatively open attitudes toward all kinds of people passing by Nancun. However, the village of “dead landlords” was to witness the ambitions of both the nationalists and the communists.

2. A Base Area of the Nationalists

Different from Xigou and Beiwan, where the nationalists were driven out in the 1930-1940s, Nancun was steadily controlled by the nationalists since the 1920s. Within the first several years after the collapse of the Qing dynasty, when different political powers were fighting to build up a national government, the Nancun area was the base camp of the warlord controlling the whole province.²¹ In March 1925, when the

¹⁸ Ye Caoxiang and Zeng Yinxiang, 2002, “Xiri Baqu Meikuangye gaimao” [The outline of the coal minning in the Ba district before the liberation, 昔日坝区煤矿业概貌], in *Xinxian wenshi heding ben*, Vol. 6-10, pp.11-17.

¹⁹ Freedman, Maurice. 1958. *Clan organization in South East China*. London: Althone Press.

²⁰ Some scholars noticed that the clan organizations in south China were always fervent to invest in agriculture and business to expand the fortunes of the clan. Liu Zhiwei, 1992, “Zongzu yu shatian kaifa” [The clan organizations and the cultivation of the sandy shoals, 宗族与沙田开发], in *Zhongguo Nongshi* [The History of Chinese Agriculture, 中国农史], no. 4.

²¹ Luo Yiquan. 1979, “Ji Sun Zhongshan nanxia hufa hou shinian jian yueju zhi yanbian” [The political alterations in Guangdong Province within the ten years after Sun Yet-sen’s Constitutional Protection Movement, 记孙中山南下护法后十年间粤局之演变], in *Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi Guangdong sheng weiyuanhui* (eds.), 1979, *Guangdong wenshi ziliao* [The cultural and historical materials

nationalists and the communists were still in a coalition, their joint troops took over the Nancun area in their expeditions over China to clean up the warlords. When news about the death of Sun Yet-sen, the founding-father of the nationalists, reached the Nancun area, the expedition troops just took over the county seat. On March 30, the future opponents, the top leaders of the nationalists and the communists, together held a public memorial ceremony for Sun on the county seat.²²

Around the year of 1926, the nationalists consolidated their rule over the Nancun area. A local militia bureau was set up in the district as the executing administration, and Nancun was chosen as the site for one of the four sub-bureaus.²³ He Shanglan, whose forefathers had worked as the manager of their sub-clan for several generations, was selected head of Nancun, which began the dominance of Shanglan's family in village administration in the following twenty-three years. The clan-managers (*zhushi*) were very influential in Nancun, because they kept records of clan properties and decided who could rent the clan land. Moreover, "Shanglan's family ranked senior in the clan. Although their sub-clan was not the most numerous in number, Shanglan was a very influential figure." A distant grand-nephew of Shanglan, He Piquan, reveals the dominance of Shanglan's.²⁴

During their twenty-three year rule of the Nancun area, like other places

of Guangdong province, 广东文史资料], Vol. 25, pp.105-160.

²² In that ceremony, the future president of the nationalist government, Chiang Kai-shek, and the future prime minister of the communist government, Zhou Enlai, both made a speech. Chen Zixian, 2000, "Dongzhenjun zai 'Xingxian'" [The Eastern Expedition troop in 'Xing' county, 东征军在兴县], in "Xinxian" *wenshi heding ben*, Vol. 1-5, pp.260-265.

²³ Local archive, NCX198608, "Xingxian" "*baqu*" *quzhi* ["Ba" district gazetteer, "兴县" "坝区" 区志], pp.36-39.

²⁴ Ibid. From interview, NC200604014HPQ.

countrywide, the nationalists was continuously disturbed by the communists and the Japanese. Since the early 1930s, the communists from their central base fifty miles away made great efforts to establish their bases or guerilla areas in the Nancun area.²⁵ Although the nationalists were busy defending against the communists, Nancun was never the battlefield. Soon after the communists gave up their central base and the local militia gradually prevailed over the communist guerilla, the national war against Japanese invaders broke out. During the eight-year wartime in 1937-1945, the Japanese air force poured bombs over Nancun area three times.²⁶ However, Japanese troops never reached Nancun area. Instead, the Nancun area provided shelters for the nationalists.²⁷ Some agencies of the provincial government were stationed in the county seat for a couple of years.

The nationalist firmly controlled the Nancun area till their final defeat by the communists. During the years of their dominance, the nationalists not only established village administration in Nancun area, but also successfully recruited many villagers into their political organizations. In 1944, a nationalist party group (*dang zhibu*) was set up in Nancun as a joint branch of Nancun and a neighboring village. The number of nationalist party members reached twenty-two out of about 4,500 residents.²⁸ Moreover, over ten

²⁵ According to a record in the local gazetteer, in 1931-35 the communists made great efforts to set up a base in a mountain area about twenty miles away from Nancun. Local archive, NCT198601 “Xingxian” “Huaiqu” *quzhi*, Vol. 1, pp.88-120

²⁶ Zhang Yunling, 2000, “Kangri zhanzheng shiqi diji hongzha xingcheng jishi” [The records of the Japanese bombing on the Xing county, 抗日战争时期敌机轰炸兴城记], in *Xinxian wenshi heding ben*, Vol. 1-5, p.635.

²⁷ Luo Yahui, 2000, “‘Xingxian’ Kangri jiuwang yundong shilia zheshi” [The historical records of the anti-Japanese movement in the “Xing” county, “兴县”抗日救亡运动史料撷拾], in “Xinxian” *wenshi heding ben*, Vol. 1-5, pp. 271-272.

²⁸ According to Ba district gazetteer, all heads of the branch in 1943-1949 were Nancun villagers. Local

senior students of the Nancun clan-sponsored school joined the nationalist youth league (*sanqingtuan*) before 1947.²⁹ Nancun also provided soldiers for the nationalist troop.

There were two or three enlisted from each He sub-clan during the civil war between the nationalists and the communists, while over ten from thirty Cai households of Nancun were conscribed.³⁰

With the defeats in major battlefields in northern and eastern China in 1949, the nationalist troops had to give up southern China. Some Nancun soldiers withdrew to Taiwan with the nationalist troops and never returned home. Their families were going to witness the communist efforts to reconstruct this nationalist base village.

3. The advent of the Communists

After several rounds of alternate occupations over the Nancun area, the communists finally seized the county seat and reinforced their control in October 1949.³¹ In the middle of that month, a mass gathering was organized in the town seat two miles away from Nancun, in order to celebrate the liberation of the area and the establishment

archive, NCT198608, “*Xingxian*” “*baqu*” *quzhi*, pp.44-45. The number of nationalist party members in Nancun branch was recorded in Huai district gazetteer. Huai district was a part of Ba district till 1978. There were three nationalist party branches in Huai area before 1949, with a total of 73 nationalist party members. Local archive, NCT198601, “*Xingxian*” “*Huaiqu*” *quzhi*, vol. 1, p.60. In 1956, the population of Nancun was 2,671, and that neighboring village was 1,868. Local archive, NCT198601, “*Xingxian*” “*Huaiqu*” *quzhi*, vol. 1, p.3.

²⁹ From interview, NC200604072HHL.

³⁰ There were about 600 He households and 30 Cai households in Nancun. However, the numbers of enlisted nationalist soldiers were almost equal among the two clans. The Hes stated that joining the army was the only way for the Cais to have a better life, while the Cais believed they were framed by the Hes. From interview, NC200603033HSC and NC200604181CYQ.

³¹ *Xingxian zhengxie wenshi ziliao yanjiu weiyuanhui*, 1990, “‘*Xingxian*’ de jiefang he jianzheng jingguo” [The liberation of “Xing” county and the flowing administrative construction, “兴县”的解放和建政经过], in *Xingxian wenshi*, vol 14. pp.28-35.

of the communist central government.³²

The central government clearly declared to fight against “the feudal and semi-feudal land ownership system” when the communists stepped into Nancun.³³ However, there was tons of work waiting for the communist before they could launch land reform in former nationalist base areas like Nancun. In March 1949, based on an observation of the distinctiveness of the nationalist-controlled south China, Mao Zedong, chairman of the communist party, pointed out that the communists might need to spend one or two years in preparing for the land reform there.³⁴ In the Nancun area, the tasks that Mao proposed prior to the land redistribution included recapitulated as the eight-character campaign (*qingfei fanba, jianzu jianxi*): cleaning-out-bandits, struggling-against-local-despots, rent-reduction, and interest-reduction.

The communist started the preparations in the Nancun area right after the takeover. In October 1949, two cadres from the district government arrived at Nancun. They helped setting up a peasant association, and appointed an immigrant, Wang Renzheng, as the head. “The district did not want to appoint someone from either the He clan or the Cai.” He Shengcai, a chosen assistant of head Wang, reasoned Wang’s appointment. “The He clan was the biggest landholder of Nancun, and there were quite a few members

³² Local archive, NCT198601, “*Xingxian*” “*Huaiqu*” *quzhi*, vol 1, p.121.

³³ The Chinese people’s political consultative conference issued the common program on September 29, 1949, the same day when the communists finally took over the county site of the Nancun area. The land redistribution project was announced in the common program. Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi, 1950, *Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi gongtong gangling*.

³⁴ Mao Zedong, 1991, “Zai qijie erzhong quanhui shang de jianghua” [Speech at the second plenum of the 7th central committee of the Communist Party of China, 在七届二中全会上的讲话], in *Mao Zedong xuanji*, vol. 4, p.1429.

from Cai who were nationalist soldiers and who joined the bandit group around.”³⁵

Therefore, the Cais and the Hes were all under attack in the preparation campaigns.

In the winter of 1949, the He clan was under heavy fire through rent-reduction and the interest-reduction. In November, the county government issued specific directives on the reduction campaign (*shuangjian*). The tenants were required to pay less than 25 percent of the amount they paid before, and the annual percentage rate of a loan could not exceed 30 percent. The communists claimed that the reduction campaign saved the 9,000 households of the Nancun district 4,446 shi of grain (about 700, 000 pound).³⁶ The He clan suffered financially. However, the loss of the He clan as a whole in Nancun was not very gloomy. According to the communist survey, five He sub-clans owned about 46 percent of the land in Nancun, and almost all of the tenants were the descents of the He clan.³⁷ The rent-reduction in fact just converted the clan income which was redistributed among the members into direct income of each household.

Moreover, the Hes played trick to protect the properties of their clan. Some lands owned by the sub-clans were claimed as the properties of the tenants. Kuang Qiudai, the wife of a He, was aware that they could hold the income for the clan, as well as helping the clan to avoid heavy taxes imposed by the communists. “We owned 5 *mu* lands by ourselves, and there were seven persons in the household. So it was safe for us to claim 7 out of 10 *mu* (2.5 acres) lands rented from our sub-clan as our own.”³⁸ Thanks to the

³⁵ From interview, NC200407221HSC.

³⁶ Local archive, NCX1950101, “Shuangjian gongzuo de chubu zongjie” [The summary of the reduction campaign, 双减工作的初步总结] (1950/1), written by the Xing county committee.

³⁷ Local archive, NCQ1951012, “‘Baqu’ tugai gongzuo zongjie baogao” (1951/01/23)

³⁸ From interview, NC200604062KQD

clan-sponsored school and their experiences in running business, the Hes knew how to protect their clan and themselves through some elaborate calculations. Therefore, the reduction might decrease the income of the He sub-clans, but it is hard to say that the loss of the Hes was disastrous.

The Cai clan who rent a few plots from the Hes gained some benefits from the reduction. However, the Cais suffered a lot from the cleaning of bandits and local-despots in May 1950. During the nationalist time, the Hes dominated the village, but most of the administrative heads fled and then could not be targeted for the campaign. Meanwhile, the Cais were unfortunately related to a bandit group in the Nancun area. The head of the bandits was a distant relative of the Cai clan in Nancun, and it was said several Cai members enlisted by the nationalist troops joined the bandits after the defeat of the nationalists.³⁹ As a result, the Cais attracted special attentions from the communists. “They asked us about the stationing location of the bandits, but how could we know?” Cai Yiqi still feels angry at the treatment they received from the communist. “Before the communist came, the Hes did not dare to ride roughshod over us overtly. Now they could beat us without any hesitation.”⁴⁰ Two Cais were physically tortured in a struggle session. In Nancun, the campaign to cleanup bandits and despots finally turned into a clash between the Hes and the Cais. In August, the head of the bandits was caught, which finally drew a conclusion on the campaign against bandits and despots and the

³⁹ Zeng Yinxiang and Ye Chaoqun, 2000, “Huxie feiban zai ‘Baqu’ de baoxing zuishi” [The atrocities of the Hu-Xie Bandit in “Ba” district, 胡谢匪帮在“坝区”的暴行追实], in *“Xinxian” wenshi heding ben*, Vol. 1-5, pp. 642-647. From interview, NC20060413HJY.

⁴⁰ From interview, NC200604181CYQ.

suffering of the Cais as well.⁴¹

Through the double- reduction campaign and the cleanup campaign, the communists successfully stepped into Nancun. In April 1950, the peasant association of Nancun was recognized as official administration.⁴² At the same time, the district cadres working in Nancun recommended three activists to join the communist party. Moreover, the activists were sent to the training camps for land reform.⁴³ The communists in the Nancun area had spent one year to complete the tasks set by Mao, and the area was ready for the land redistribution then.

II. The Well-planned Land Reform

1. The new agrarian reform law

Five years had passed since the communists issued the May Fourth Directive to launch land reform,. By June 1950, about 145 million peasants, including those in Xigou and Beiwan, had been involved in the communist land redistribution, and the reform was to influence another 264 million rural residents, like the Nancun villagers.⁴⁴ In order to carry out the projects in the late-liberated areas, in early February 1950 the central government clearly stated that a set of new regulations were going to be promulgated.⁴⁵

The communists had spent several months to deliberate the directives for the late-

⁴¹ Luo Yahui, 2002, “‘Xingxian’ jiefang chuqi de qingfei fanba.”

⁴² Local archive, NCT198601, “Xingxian” “Huaiqu” quzhi, vol. 1, p.72.

⁴³ From interview, NC200604141HJN.

⁴⁴ Liu Shaoqi, “Guanyu tudi gaige wenti de bangao” [The report on land reform, 关于土地改革问题的报告] (1950/6/14), in *Zhongguo tidi gaige shiliao xuanbian*, p.634.

⁴⁵ Zhongyang renmin zhengfu zhengwuyuan, “Guanyu xie jiefangqu tudi gaige ji zhengshou gongliang de zhishi” [The directives on land reform and the grain-tax collection, 关于新解放区土地改革及征收公粮的指示] (1950/2/28), in *Zhongguo tidi gaige shiliao xuanbian*, p.622.

liberated area.⁴⁶ Finally, on June 28, 1950, the central government promulgated the *Agrarian Law of the People's Republic of China*.

The new agrarian law advocated some new directions for the land reform in the late-liberated areas. First of all, instead of stressing the injustice of the landlord order as the 1947 basic agrarian law, the new law set fire at the irrationality of the land concentration in rural China.⁴⁷ The primary aim of land reform was “to set free the rural production, develop agricultural production and thus pave the way for new China’s industrialization.”⁴⁸ At this point, the tone of the new law was far more moderate than the 1946 May Fourth directives and the 1947 basic agrarian law, both of which focused on arousing the revolutionary enthusiasm in the countryside by targeting the exploitation of the landlords.

The mild tone of the new law could also be exemplified in the changed treatment of rich peasants. The May Fourth directive allowed the peasants to confiscate the land owned by rich peasants when “there is some unavoidable infringement.”⁴⁹ In order to equally redistribute the village land among the entire population of the village, the 1947 basic law radically advanced to confiscate the land owned by rich peasants. However,

⁴⁶ Du Runsheng, 2005, “Xinqu tudi gaige” [Land reform in the newly liberated area, 新区土地改革], in *Du Runsheng zishu: zhongguo nongcun tizhi biange zhongda juece jishi* [The memoir of Du Runsheng: the decisions on rural reforms in China, 杜润生自述：中国农村体制变革重大决策纪实], Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, pp.5-11.

⁴⁷ Selden, Mark. 1979, *The People's Republic of China: A documentary history of revolutionary change*, p.32.

⁴⁸ Zhongyang renmin zhengfu weiyuanhui, “Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tudi gaige fa” [The Agrarian Reform Law of the People's Republic of China, 中华人民共和国土地改革法], in *Zhongguo tudi gaige shiliao xuanbian*, p.642. The English translation is from Selden, Mark. 1979, *The People's Republic of China: A documentary history of revolutionary change*, p.240.

⁴⁹ “Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu qingsuan jianzu ji tudi wenti de zhishi” (1946/5/4), in *Jiefang zhanzheng shiqi tudi gaige wenjian xuanbian (1945-1949)*, p.1.

the 1950 agrarian law clearly stated to protect the rich peasants. Not only the land owned and cultivated by rich peasants but also small portions of lands rented out by rich peasants would remain untouched.

The changes of the new agrarian law would facilitate a smoother land reform in the late-liberated Nancun, which was actually based on the lessons from the campaigns in the Xigou base and the later-liberated Beiwan. The communists decided that in the late-liberated areas, “we should not make mistakes that we made before,” and “mistakes or chaotic conditions must not be allowed to remain uncorrected.”⁵⁰ The following review on the land redistribution project in the Nancun area would reveal how the land reform there was fighting against mistakes under the guidance of the moderate new law. The functions of the constant concerns of identifying and correcting mistakes would be analyzed.

2. The step-by-step redistribution

When the land reform project was launched in the late-liberated areas, the communists had successfully defeated their rivals over vast territories, and thus a planned and orderly reform was expected.⁵¹ In the Nancun area, by August 1950, the reduction project and the campaign against bandits and local despots had helped the communists to extend their influences over the countryside. A work-team from the provincial government to examine the campaigns felt satisfied with the achievements in the Nancun

⁵⁰ Liu Shaoqi, “Guanyu tudi gaige wenti de bangao”, in *Zhongguo tidi gaige shiliao xuanbian*, p.638 & 634.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p.634.

area.⁵² As a result, the county was selected as the site of an experimental program (*shidian xian*) of land reform in the province. The communists tried to unfold land reform in the late-liberated area, like Nancun, systematically and by stages.

In October 1950, a land reform corps of over four-hundred and seventy members was sent by the provincial government to carry out the land reform campaign in the county of Nancun. Firstly, the provincial corps selected three villages in the county as experimental sites. Each village was required to send a village leader to join the work corps. The assistant head of peasant association in Nancun, He Shengcai, worked with the provincial cadres and students in an experimental village. “There were over 200 people from the government at different levels working in one village. Therefore, we could do our work very efficiently.”⁵³ The land reform projects in the three experimental villages were completed in about twenty days, and after that, the work corps decided to expand the reform throughout the county by choosing an experimental village for each district.⁵⁴

While Shengcai was working in an experimental village, three activists from Nancun were recruited into the training camps held by the county or district governments.⁵⁵ Till November 10, over 1,500 activists from the grassroots had received training through studying the new law as well as the lessons from the early-liberated

⁵² Luo Yahui, 1992, “‘Xingxian’ tudi gaige huigu” [A memoir on land reform in “Xing” county, “兴县”土地改革回顾], in “*Xingxian*” *wenshi*, vol.16, pp.21-28.

⁵³ From interview, NC200407221HSC.

⁵⁴ Local archive, NCX19501114, “Di’erci tugai gongzuo baogao” [The report on the second phase of land reform, 第二次土改工作报告] (1950/11/14), written by the county committee.

⁵⁵ From interview, NC200407221HSC.

area.⁵⁶ The activists, together with the experienced members from the work crops, were then dispatched to ten experimental villages over the county. Nancun was not one of the chosen by the work-team, but the experimental site within the district was within the distance of two hours' walk. For about forty days, Nancun villagers kept an eye on that village. Finally, on December 25, 1950, a work-team comprising of forty-odd members was sent to Nancun to guide the two thousand villagers to carry out the land reform project.

Compared with the experiences in the Xigou base and the later-liberated Beiwan, the land reform campaigns in the Nancun area were carried out carefully step by step: Starting from three experimental villages in the county, the project was expanded to the experiment sites from every district, and finally reached each village. During the process, on the one hand, more village functionaries were trained by participating in the experimental programs. On the other hand, the problems occurring in the experimental villages could be reported and solved immediately. After issuing revised directives, the mistakes could be prevented in subsequent steps.⁵⁷

As a result of the cautious planning, the land reform project in Nancun was carried out very smoothly. The procedures of the project in Nancun were almost exact replicas of the land redistribution campaign in Beiwan a year ago. Firstly, the work-team held mass meetings for Nancun villagers to study the new agrarian law and the directives to differentiate the classes. Next, the villagers were classified into different classes. The well-educated Hes in Nancun must have conducted some careful calculations. All stores

⁵⁶ Local archive, NCX19501114, "Di'erci tugai gongzuo baogao."

⁵⁷ Luo Yahui, 1992, "Xingxian tudi gaige huigu", in *Xingxian wenshi*, vol.16, pp.24-25.

along the Nancun market street were claimed as properties of the clan. As for the land, just like what happened during the reduction campaign, some plots rented from the clan were claimed as their own properties, while some clan managers might write their own land into the clan account books.⁵⁸ No person was labeled as landlord, and about 50 percent of the 600 households were categorized as middle peasants. Finally, over 30 percent of the village land owned by the “dead landlords” was confiscated, and then distributed to the 200-odd poor peasant households and 30 hired-labors. The minority Cais got some land, while the Hes who rented land from their clans did not gain a lot but might have lost some to the Cais.⁵⁹ The situation was the same when it came to valuables, such as cattle and houses, owned by the He clan. The ordinary minority Cai household benefited from the land redistribution, but not the ordinary Hes.

In sum, when the program drew to a conclusion in Nancun, the two-month land reform campaign had been relatively smooth. Compared with the chaotic beginning of land reform in Xigou, Nancun villagers had a peaceful land reform like the first redistribution program in Beiwan. Moreover, due to the deliberated plan, the process in Nancun was far more well-organized than in Beiwan. However, like the examination campaign which broke up the peace in Beiwan, Nancun villagers were also soon witnessed the efforts to identify and correct mistakes.

III. The Hierarchical Rectifications

1. The top leaders as policy makers

⁵⁸ From interview, NC200604062KQD and NC200604111HZL.

⁵⁹ Local archive, NCQ19510123, “‘Baqu’ tugai gongzuo zongjie baogao.” From interview, NC200604014HPQ.

Three months after the conclusion of the land reform project in Nancun, an examination campaign was launched as a routine follow-up. In May-October 1951, the county government ordered the district and village governments to “make up for a missed lesson” (*bu shang yi ke*). This campaign focused on some controversial cases on class classification and confiscation. However, the major task of the examination campaign was to reinforce the grassroots organization.⁶⁰ In Nancun, the three basic organizations, the peasants association, the women federation, and the youth league, all organized mass meetings. On the one hand, the meetings were regarded as a necessary mobilization for the first farming season after land reform. On the other hand, several village leaders had been promoted to higher levels, and new leaders were elected.⁶¹ This time the Hesi in Nancun managed to dominate the village organizations. The new head of the peasants association was also from the He clan.

As a routine follow-up, in the Nancun area, the examination campaign in 1951 summer focused on the consolidation of the previous movements. At that time, the provincial work corps had left to expand the land reform project from the experimental sites to the countryside throughout the province. However, the experimental projects might not be able to be the models for other villages. Controversies had already arisen between the provincial government and its supervisor, the regional bureau. The central-south bureau was very unsatisfied with “the cold and cheerless” situation of the peaceful land reform.⁶²

⁶⁰ Luo Yahui, 1992, “‘ingxian’ tudi gaige huigu”, p.27. “*Xingxian*” *xianzhi*, p.173.

⁶¹ From interview, NC200407221HSC.

⁶² Liu Zijian, 2003 “Ye Jianying, Fang Fang yu Guangdong tigi: jianyu Du Runsheng tongzhi shangque” [Ye Jianying, Fang Fang and land reform in Guangdong province, 叶剑英、方方与广东土改——兼与杜

While formulating the 1950 agrarian law, Liu Shaoqi, the top leader of land reform since 1946, had made it clear that before the nationwide takeover of the communists, violent attacks on the landlords was necessary. But with the communist military victory, the land reform project in the newly liberated south China could be carried out in a milder approach.⁶³ On the contrary, the central-south bureau, the regional administration of south China, harshly criticized the tendency of peaceful land reform in the experimental programs. The land reform projects in the Nancun area were seen as a mistake by avoiding class struggle. As a result, the central-south bureau criticized the provincial government as “out of date” (*guoshi*).⁶⁴ The experimental projects in the Nancun area were completely rejected by the regional administration, which successfully convinced the central committee to send cadres from the north to the south.

In fact, it is not accurate to describe the milder approach in the Nancun area as a peaceful land reform avoiding class struggle. The Nancun villagers successfully avoided any violent struggles by condemning the “dead landlords.” The “dead landlords” was a useful excuse for almost every village in the county. But some villages might be stunted by the conflicts between clans and sub-clans. Therefore, not all villages in the county were exempt from violence. During the experimental period, by January 1951, sixty-two

润生同志商榷], in *Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi Guangdong sheng Meizhou shi wenhua yu xueyi weiyuanhui* (eds.), *Meizhou Wenshi* [The cultural and historical material of Meizhou sub-region, 梅州文史], vol. 16, pp. 85-107. In Vogel's monograph on the Guangdong provincial politics, he also recorded the controversies between the provincial government and the regional bureau, central-south bureau. Vogel, Ezra, 1971, *Canton Under Communism: Programs and politics in a provincial capital, 1949-1968*, New York, NY: Harper Torch books.

⁶³ Liu Shaoqi, “Guanyu tudi gaige wenti de baogao”, p. 642.

⁶⁴ Zhongnan tudi gaige weiyuanhui, “Guanyu zhongnan gesheng tugai shidian gongzuo qingkuang de baogao” [Report on the experimental programs in the central-south provinces, 关于中南各省土改试点工作情况的报告] (1950/11/26), in *Zhongguo tudi gaige shiliao xuanbian*, pp. 690-693.

people in the county were condemned as stubborn class enemies, and were then sent to prison. Five more were sentenced to death, while one among them was executed directly in a mass gathering.⁶⁵ Compared to the harsh struggles in the former-liberated areas, the violence in the Nancun area was not so devastating. The 1950 agrarian law did promote an orderly land reform in the newly-liberated area. But the provincial leaders did not receive any praise. Instead, they were harshly criticized by both the regional and the central governments for their capitulation to class enemies.

Since the beginning of land reform in the newly liberated area, possible mistakes had drawn great attention from the top leaders of the central government. In his report on land reform, Liu Shaoqi reviewed the mistakes in the previous campaigns.⁶⁶ Two factors were concluded to be responsible for the chaotic experiences of the Xigou and Beiwan villagers. On the one hand, the intense war with the nationalists constantly forced the communists to carry out the reform in a rush. The policies formulated in the wartime not only could not take all things into consideration, but also was impossible for them to be strictly followed at the grassroots. On the other hand, the communist top leaders were also aware that the lack of experiences from top to bottom also contributed to the mistakes. In his analysis on the radical mistakes in former campaigns, party chairman Mao Zedong clearly stated that, due to the lack of experience, the communists did not know how to classify village residents: sometimes poor peasants were even ranked as

⁶⁵ Local archive, NCX19510215, “Xingxian” tugai gongzuo chubu zongjie (1951/2/15). Peng Tie, 1997, “‘Xingxian’ tudi gaige yundong” [Land reform in “Xing” county, “兴县” 土地改革运动], in Meixian wenshi, Vol. 11, pp.201-212.

⁶⁶ Liu Shaoqi, “Guanyu tudi gaige wenti de baogao”, p. 638.

landlords.⁶⁷

In the eyes of the top leaders, the mistakes in previous campaigns provided a chance to correct the mistakes and then to stick to the truth. In early September 1947, when Liu Shaoqi was reviewing the mistakes in the base areas, he pointed out: “There are no perfect leaders at all times and all over the world. Even though the leaders do not want to make mistakes themselves, there are always some mistakes. We should not be afraid of mistakes ... As long as mistakes are corrected, the truth will be found out.”⁶⁸ According to the top leaders, mistakes were regarded as a way toward better policies and even the truth.

However, it is not easy to judge who should take the responsibilities for the peaceful land reform in the Nancun area. The provincial leaders were no more moderate than the central leaders. However, the provincial leaders were harshly criticized by the central government. A possible explanation for the failure of the provincial government might not be about the mild policies at that time, but about the central government’s effort to strengthen their control over the province. The provincial capital is about 1,500 miles away from the state capital. Such a distance might have already made the central government worry about its relationship with this newly liberated province. Moreover, in October 1949, when the provincial government was established, all four chairmen were natives, two of whom were leaders of local guerillas. The native leaders were familiar with local situations, and were also popular among the grassroots cadres. Such solid and

⁶⁷ Mao Zedong, 1999, “Zai qijie sanzong quanwei shang de zongjie baogao” (1950/6/9), in *Mao Zedong wenji*, vol. 6, pp. 68-70.

⁶⁸ Liu Shaoqi, “Zai quanguo tudi huiyi shang de jielun” (1947/9/13), in *Liu Shaoqi xuanji*, vol.1, pp.384-385.

somewhat personal connections between the provincial leaders and the grassroots might have made the central government's worry about localism and even separatism.

The provincial leaders may not have any hint about the worries of the central government at that time. When the experimental programs in the Nancun area were rejected and criticized, the provincial government converted to follow the directives from their direct supervisor, the central-south bureau. Since May 1951, when the former experimental sites such as the Nancun area were conducting the routine examination, the land reform campaign was launched in other areas in the province. Thousands of cadres were sent from the north directly by the central-south bureau, and were dispatched to direct the campaign at the grassroots. Compared with their local counterparts, these northern cadres were furnished with experiences from the land reform in the North, and they soon brought some radical techniques, such as violent struggle sessions, into the province.⁶⁹

Obviously the provincial leaders did not know that the central government had already viewed them as potential separatists. Although the northern cadres took over the land reform over the province in the spring of 1951, the native provincial leaders were not removed from their positions, and they were still the top superintendents of the province. Obviously, the native leaders were not happy at the radical land reform. In August 1951, the provincial leaders publicly criticized the radical tendency and proposed a rectification campaign to correct the mistakes. However, the provincial leaders never got the chance to carry out the rectification. Instead they were criticized by the central-south bureau again, and in the spring of 1952 the central government appointed a high-

⁶⁹ Liu Zijian, 2003 "Ye Jianying, Fang Fang yu Guangdong tigai: jianyu Du Runsheng tongzhi shangque"

rank northern cadre, Tao Zhu, as the fifth-ranking provincial leader. As the highest non-native provincial leaders, Tao was assigned by the central government to take charge of the land reform project. Moreover, in June 1952, party chairman Mao Zedong called on a special meeting with the native provincial leaders, and he directly criticized their localism. Following that, a rectification campaign was launched to correct the localist mistakes in the province. The native leaders were asked to make self-criticism, and finally two topmost leaders of the provincial government, Fang Fang and Ye Jianying, were removed from their positions.

2. Local cadres and the executive personnel

The land reform campaign in the Nancun area had been criticized as a failed experimental program by the central-south bureau in April 1951. The following routine examination campaign in the fall of 1951 could not satisfy the hard-liners either. After the regional and central governments started to clearly criticize localism of the provincial leaders, the northern cadres gradually took over the provincial administration and the land reform project. The native cadres of the Nancun area were soon under fire.

In the spring of 1952, a rectification campaign targeting the local governments (*tugai zhengdui*) was declared by the new provincial government. Inner-party rectification had been a popular strategy since the beginning of land reform in the base areas. When the chaos occurred in the settling-accounts campaign in Xigou, the corrupt local cadres were condemned and purged. When land reform was just launched in the newly liberated areas, only 10 percent of the executive personnel were old cadres from the base or guerilla areas, and 90 percent were newly recruited students and village

activists.⁷⁰ The newly-recruited party members and work-team members were inexperienced and thus made many mistakes. Therefore, the rectification campaign among the work-team members, especially the party members, was a chance to educate the new cadres. In order to help the executive personnel to behave appropriately, they should experience a process of “working continuously, making mistakes continuously, being rectified continuously, and making progress continuously.”⁷¹

At the same time, the communist party also believed that someone from the landlord or local despot families always tried to destroy the land reform by joining in the executive groups of land reform.⁷² Only when these hidden-enemies were dug out firstly, the mistakes in the former campaigns could be corrected. In the spring of 1952, the central-south bureau made special emphasis on rectification within the party in the experimental sites, such as the Nancun area. Four types of bad elements were to be identified: “the local despot element, the corrupt element, the malpractice element, and the impure element”.⁷³ It even advocated focusing on the number of bad elements, only to make sure that all bad elements had been cleared out. The intra-party rectification in the Nancun area campaign was launched as a part of the criticism targeting localism.

After the experimental program was completed in the Nancun area, a great

⁷⁰ Du Runsheng, “Zhongnan quanqu qu dong jin chun tudi gaige de jingguo yu zhuyao jingyan ji jinhou jihua” [The land reform campaigns in the north-south region since last winter, the lessons, and the future plan, 中南全区去冬今春土地改革的经过与主要经验及今后计划] (1951/4/9), in *Zhongguo tidi gaige shiliao xuanbian*, pp. 733-741.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p.739.

⁷² “Zhonggong zhongyang dui jinsui zhengdang wenti de zhishi” [The directives on the inner-party rectification in the Jin-Sui region, 中共中央对晋绥整党问题的指示] (1948/5/8), in *Zhongguo tidi gaige shiliao xuanbian*, pp.497-499.

⁷³ Liu Zhenzhong, 1999, “Tugai zai Xinxian” [The land reform in Xingxian county, 土改在兴县], in *Meizhou wenshi*, vol. 13, pp.119-122.

number of native cadres got promotion and were assigned new jobs outside the county. The new county party secretary, Huang Weili, was not exactly a native but from a neighboring county. Huang was also the administrator of the county government at that time, and therefore the absolute leader of the county during the rectification campaign. While the northern cadres were fighting against localism in the province, Huang, the partially native leader, chose to follow the northern cadres to gain a safe position for himself. During Huang's direction, few of the 1000-odd executive personnel who stayed in the county after the land reform escaped from struggle sessions in the intra-party rectification. From February to May, 1952, over 95 percent of county and district leaders and 75 percent of village activists were either removed from their position or lost their party membership.⁷⁴

In Nancun, through the routine examination campaign in the fall of 1951, the Hes had successfully replaced the village leaders with their clan members. However, the intra-party rectification campaign in the following spring set fire on both the new village leaders from the Hes and the former leaders appointed by the communists. "The new elected leaders were in a better situation, because they just got the position, but all the old leaders, especially we five early-recruited party members, suffered a lot." He Shengcai, the first assistant head of the village peasant association, was sent back to Nancun from his new position in a neighboring district. "Our family background, our sayings and behaviors were all scrutinized."⁷⁵ As the son of a poor clan manager, Shengcai was placed on probation within the party. Shengcai's supervisor, the first head of peasant

⁷⁴ From local archive, NCX198711 "Xingxian xianwei bangongshi zhi" [The historical record of the county committee, 兴县县委办公室志], compiled by the county committee, p.75.

⁷⁵ From interview, NC200603302HSC.

association, Wang Renzheng, lost everything he gained. As an immigrant to Nancun, Renzheng lacked the support that Shengcai could get from the He clan. Two or three months after he was purged, Wang Renzheng died at his early fifties.⁷⁶

The central and regional authorities were unsatisfied at the land reform campaigns in south China. Because the peaceful land reform only redistributed the land and other properties among villagers, but did not topple down the old social order, such as the power of the clan organization.⁷⁷ For this reason, localism was targeted. The higher officials believed that the provincial leaders and local cadres all tried to protect their fellows. However, from the rectification campaigns in the Nancun area, it was hard to conclude that the rectifications overthrew the networking among the local natives. On the contrary, one result of the fight against the so-called “localism” might be the reinforcement of the division between the natives and the non-natives—especially the northern cadres and their followers.

3. The targeted villagers

Nancun villagers probably did not know well about the conflicts between the provincial government and the regional bureau. However, before the intra-party rectification reached Nancun, the villagers might have sensed the tension through the power shifting in the provincial and county government. The tension within Nancun must have been intensified after the old village leaders were publicly criticized and finally purged. It was reasonable for the villagers to believe that the rectifications would

⁷⁶ From interview, NC200603311KQD and NC200604014HPQ.

⁷⁷ Du Runsheng, 2005, “Xinqu tudi gaige”, p.15.

not stop at an intra-party level, when three village youth were sent back to Nancun.

The first group of people that were affected by the rectification campaign was the activists and the village leaders. Some villagers might think that this group just had got what they deserve. “Wang Renzheng was not very nice to the Hes when he was the head of peasant association.” Wang’s assistant, He Shengcai admitted.⁷⁸ Therefore, the suffering of Wang could be taken for granted somewhat, although the villagers could not understand the accusations on Wang, such as localism. However, the return of the three young men might arouse confusion among Nancun villagers.

After graduating from the village school sponsored by the clan, some young Hes went outside to make a living or pursue higher education. All of the three returning young men left the village before the communists came. “I worked in a shop in the prefecture seat.” He Jiangyuan was one of the three youth. “The other two, I believed, studied in the teacher’s training school.”⁷⁹ Right after their takeover, the communists established a revolutionary university, Nanfang University, to recruit well-educated youth and then to provide them necessary training mainly through studying the party policies and party history. As was the case in other revolutionary universities in the base areas and early-liberated areas, the students at Nanfang University were going to be assigned to local governments.⁸⁰ He Jiangyuan joined Nanfang University in January 1950. Almost at the same time, the two in normal school were recruited into some local training camps. After the experimental land reform program was launched, the students were encouraged

⁷⁸ From interview, NC200603302HSC.

⁷⁹ From interview, NC200604132HJY.

⁸⁰ Li Youhua (etc.), 1999, “Ye Jianying yu Nanfang daxue” [Ye Jianying and Nanfang University, 叶剑英与南方大学], in *Meizhou wenshi*, vol. 13, pp.1-5.

to join the work corps. Although the Nancun area, Jiangyuan's hometown, was one of the experimental sites, Jiangyuan was assigned to another corps.

After the experimental program in that experimental site, Jiangyuan was assigned to a work-team which was going to direct the land reform project in a neighboring county. "Right five days before we set off, the rectification campaign started." Jiangyuan had clear memories on his experience in the rectification.⁸¹ He was not a communist party member, but he was not exempted from the intra-party rectification. Soon he was kicked out from the work-team, because he was believed to be a member of the nationalist party. "I still could not figure out how they got to know that I once joined the nationalist youth league in the clan school."⁸² Such controversial experience forced Jiangyuan and the other two to return to the village. Jiangyuan's story might have disturbed quite a few villagers who joined the nationalist party or nationalist youth league. They kept silent on their former membership in the land reform campaign. Would the coming rectification campaign put them under fire?

The rectification campaign targeting the mistakes in the former land reform project was finally launched in the Nancun area in January 1953. The central government and the central-south bureau believed that the peaceful land reform under the influences of localism did not overturn the old social order. The rectification campaign directed by the northern cadres aimed to complete the task.

Just as what happened in the land reform campaign, a work-team was sent to Nancun. Villagers soon found out that two work-team members did not speak local

⁸¹ From interview, NC200604132HJY.

⁸² Ibid.

dialect at all. “They might be able to understand some, but it was hard for me to understand them.” The office of the village peasant association was in the same building as Kuang Qiudai’s home, so Wang had more chances to observe the work-team. “The northern men were not in charge, but the work-team head did treat them differently.”⁸³ This mixed work-team was going to help Nancun villagers to identify and correct the mistakes in the land redistribution campaign.

In the eyes of Nancun villagers, the most shocking task that what the work-team declared to do was to examine the class label of each household. The communists had taken over the area for three years, and the Nancun villagers knew well that the treatments of people in different class categories. “In a mass meeting, someone asked the work-team why we should be re-ranked, because the number of the landlord households in our village had met the quota.” He Zhanghua believed that most villagers knew something about the quota of the landlord households for each village, although it was never announced publicly. “The head of work-team told us that the number was not important at all.”⁸⁴ Although the villagers did not figure out what that really mattered, they sensed that this time their dead ancestors might not be able to shelter them.

In Nancun, as well as other southern villagers, it was a tradition for the big-landholders to establish the clan trust fund. Their descents would not inherit a large portion of land directly, but every one could benefit from the clan land.⁸⁵ In the 1951 land reform campaign, over thirty dead landlords were identified in Nancun, and no one

⁸³ From interview, 200604163KQD.

⁸⁴ From interview, 200604031HZH.

⁸⁵ Ye Chaoqun and Zeng Yinxiang, 2000, “Jiefang qian Baqu de ‘sidizhu’ ”

alive. Therefore, struggle sessions against landlords were just skipped. Probably that could partly explain why the central-south bureau was not satisfied at “the cold and cheerless” land reform directed by the provincial government. The rectification work-team would definitely work hard to break up the icy cold in Nancun.

All former clan managers were scrutinized by the work-team members, and six of them were labeled as the landlords now. “Those who were upgraded as landlords were not nice to other clan members, when they worked as clan managers.” Shengcai was dismissed from the communists partially because his father was a clan manager, but his family was not among the six new landlords. “Few villagers would stand for them or even say anything good about them.”⁸⁶ The Nancun work-team might feel proud to have been able to identify some villainous landlords, and such pride could be shared with other work-teams working in the county. Although the 1951 land reform campaign identified about ten thousand “dead landlords,” only 1,108 living landlords were labeled. The rectification work-teams in 1953 identified 1,348 new landlord households.⁸⁷ The rectification campaign doubled the number of the landlords in the county. It would be easy to tell how big the mistakes of the 1951 campaign had been.

At the beginning, Nancun villagers might feel somewhat lucky. Except for identifying six landlords, the rectification work-team did not change the class status of other villagers. In the 1950 land reform campaign, playing tricks by self-claiming the clan land or doing the reverse was not rare in Nancun. However, the rectification work-team did not touch that problem at all. Even to those newly-identified landlords, the

⁸⁶ From interview, NC200603302HSC.

⁸⁷ Luo Yahui, 1992, “Xingxian tudi gaige huigu.”

work-team only declared that these clan managers enriched themselves by appropriating and embezzling clan incomes.⁸⁸ The work-team did not care about the land, the amount of which had been fixed and every village could see. They believed that the corrupt clan managers might have treasures hidden, such as some gold. Digging out the valuables would expose the corruption of the managers, and would even damage the villagers' confidence toward their clan as well.⁸⁹

If the Hes in Nancun did not suffer much since the communists came, the work-team's attempt to dig out the hidden treasure would change their fortune. The struggle session fighting the newly-labeled landlords was held in one ancestor hall. "They were asked to confess their corruption in the presence of their ancestors." Kuang Qiudai, the wife of a He, talked about the scene about which most of the old villagers did not want to talk. "Of course, no one confessed. Then they were hanged and thrashed by some Cais."⁹⁰ It was not a pleasant experience to see those whom she called uncles to suffer. So Qiudai left the ancestor hall soon. However, not everyone could find a good excuse to leave like her, who had four little boys at that time. The Hes in their ancestor hall had to witness their clan fellows beaten by someone from another clan.

Several small struggle sessions were held in the following days. Nowadays the old Hes did not have a clear idea whether some valuables were found out, but they remembered the four clan members who committed suicide after the struggles.⁹¹ The

⁸⁸ From interview, NC200603303HSC.

⁸⁹ From interview, NC200604041HZR.

⁹⁰ From interview, NC200604182KQD.

⁹¹ From interview, NC200604171HJH and NC200604182KQD.

four names were also listed among the death roll of the rectification campaign.⁹² Three of them were from the newly-labeled landlords. The work-team believed that they committed suicide to avoid surrendering their hidden treasure. However, He Chiming, the first person who killed himself by cutting the throat, was not a landlord. Chiming was the head of the peasant association that the Hes managed to elect in the 1951 examination campaign. The work-team believed that he was a gambler. “He was worried that he might be labeled as landlord. When he was the head of the peasant association, he beat a peasant and was corrupt. So he was afraid of being struggled against by the mass.”⁹³ Chiming was so worried that he could not eat anything for three days before he killed himself.

Chiming’s death could reveal the tense and horrific air over Nancun at that time. Quite a number of households were disturbed, in addition to the newly-labeled landlords. “One day some work-team members came to ask about my membership of the nationalist youth league. My uncle was the head of our household. He told them it was absurd and I must have been framed by someone.”⁹⁴ A few days later, He Honglan’s uncle arranged Honglan to flee with three other youth of Nancun in the deep night. Even today Honglan still does not want to make it clear whether he was a member of the nationalist youth league or not. However, he loves to talk about his experience after he fled to a neighboring province. That province was poorer than the Nancun area, so the communists could not even recruit enough well-educated people for the newly-

⁹² From local archive, NCX19505213, “Tugai fucha zhong de zisha qingkuang tongji biao” [The record of the suicide during the rectification campaign, 土改复查中的自杀情况统计表] (1953/2), compiled by the county committee.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ From interview, NC200604093HHL.

established county schools. Honglan passed the entrance examination, and after a short-term training he was assigned to a school where he had worked for over thirty years.

During the 1953 rectification campaign, about twenty young men fled from Nancun.⁹⁵ A few left the village without any special reason, while most of them had some unsolved historical problem like Honglan. It is interesting to explore why the authority of the neighboring province did not question the background of these runaways. “My uncle managed to get a letter of introduction for me from a neighboring village.”⁹⁶ The person who wrote the letter and stamped it for Honglan and several others has not been identified yet. Of course, not every one could get such a letter, but even those who did not have any identification document were accepted by the neighboring province. It is hard to figure out how it could work out, but it worked out anyway. “After I got a job there, I just did my work, and did not do anything special.”⁹⁷ The cautious behavior of Honglan might be crucial. The twenty runaways might be very common in their workplaces, and no one proposed to check their background even during the Cultural Revolution.

Neither did the runaways bring big troubles to their families, at least during the 1953 rectification campaign. “Someone came to ask where my husband went. I just told them that we could not feed our sons and he went out to find a job.” Kuang Qiudai’s husband was one of the nationalist party members identified by the work-team, and at that time the couple was going to have their fifth child.⁹⁸ Qiudai’s excuse might also be

⁹⁵ From interview, 200604041HZR.

⁹⁶ From interview, 200604093HHL.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ From interview, NC200604182KQD.

used by other families. The communist land redistribution project did not solve the problem of the shortage of grain which was the result of high population-density in this area. Before the communist takeover, Nancun villagers earned a great part of their income from running small shops in the village market street or transporting goods for passing merchants and the coal mines nearby. The shops were distributed to the villagers as clan prosperities, but the income of the shops had decreased dramatically. The continuous campaigns impeded Nancun villagers to devote themselves to the business.⁹⁹

The rectification work-team spent four months in Nancun, which tripled the time of the 1951 work-team. When they left in April 1953, the team members might feel happy at their achievements. The malicious clan managers were categorized as landlords, and the fighting against them completely smashed the authority and dignity of the clan in Nancun. However, nowadays villagers still insist that they were just kept apathetic in the struggle sessions targeting their suffering fellow villagers. “The people being tortured were our relatives anyway. How could any one feel happy at that?” Kuang Qiudai believed that all her clan members would be absent from the struggle sessions as long as they could find an excuse.¹⁰⁰ Even the Cais who were accused as the toughs probably did not buy the idea of the rectification work-team either. Cai Yongqing avoided identifying the hatchet men. Instead, he remarked, “Even though those managers were not nice people, the treatment they received was excessive.”¹⁰¹ During the 1953 rectification campaign, Nancun villagers might not agree with the work-team at all. However, no one

⁹⁹ From interview, NC200604121HZH and NC200604182KQD.

¹⁰⁰ From interview, NC200604182KQD.

¹⁰¹ From interview, NC200604181CYQ.

stood up to protect their fellow villagers publicly or in any way questioned the work-team.

In April 1953, the rectification work-team left Nancun. A village government comprised of members from both the Hes and the Cais had replaced the peasant association as the basic unit of local administration. It also drew a conclusion to the communist land reform project starting from 1946. Through the land redistribution project, especially the constant efforts to identify and correct mistakes during the process, a new state had been built up from the grassroots.

IV. The “New man”

The creation of the “new man” was a central topic in the Chinese communist program to build up a better world.¹⁰² The “new man” armed with the communist ideology would subject himself/herself to the state and be devoted to the programs proposed by the state.¹⁰³ The term “new man” had already been brought out in the late 1930s. However, during the land redistribution projects, the emphasis of communist morality had not been integrated into the term “new man”. In 1950, in his report on land reform, when talking about the treatment of the landlords, Liu Shaoqi clearly stated: “after long-term strenuous work, the landlords could be turned into new men.”¹⁰⁴

Therefore, during land reform, the term “new man” was mainly used to emphasize the changed status of the individual through the reform.

¹⁰² In a letter Mao wrote on May 7 1966, he detailed the path to create the socialist “new-man.” Mao asserted that these “new-men” could contribute to the communist society in the future.

¹⁰³ Wei Xin, 2001, “Gaige qian Zhongguo daodehua zhengzhide lishi fansi” [The historical reflection on the moralization of Chinese politics before the reform, 改革前中国道德化政治的历史反思], in *Zhanglue yu guanli* [Strategies and management, 战略与管理], no.2.

¹⁰⁴ Liu Shaoqi, “Guanyu tudi gaige wenti de bangao” (1950/6/14), p.635.

Through identifying and correcting mistakes, the rectification campaigns functioned to launch a hierarchical disciplinary revolution, which altered the individuals at each level. The identification of mistakes within the policies they formulated helped policymakers realize their own limitations as well as the improvements they could make. Moreover, the rectification campaigns provided chances for the higher authority to examine the loyalties and capabilities of the intermediate executives as well. At the grassroots level, through fighting against the mistakes, the villagers recognized the authorities of the new state to define what was correct and what was wrong, in spite of the fact that they might decide to keep silent or even flee.

“Correcting mistakes, and upholding truth” had become a constant belief and practice of the communists.¹⁰⁵ Probably no one had a clear idea about the truth. However, the rectification campaigns subjected everyone to the normalizing efforts of the state. The criticism and self-criticism are regarded as a central strategy to promote communist morality.¹⁰⁶ Such strategy was used in the inner-party rectifications before land reform.¹⁰⁷ During the rectifications in land reform, this strategy was continued to educate and discipline the new-recruited local cadres as well as the elder native leaders. However, the criticism had not become a popular practice over local people. It was not so hard for the peasants to keep silence or even flee away at this time. Later on, when the new generation who were raised under the red flag grew up, the criticism and self-

¹⁰⁵ Liu Shao qi, “Zai quanguo tudi huiyi shang de jielun” (1947/9/13), p.384.

¹⁰⁶ Mao Zhedong, 1991. “Zhongguo gongchandang de sanda zuofeng” [Three working-styles of Chinese communist party, 中国共产党的三大作风] (1945/4/24), in *Mao Zedong xuanji*, Vol.3, pp.1094-1095.

¹⁰⁷ See Crook, Isabel and Crook, David. 1979. *Ten Mile Inn: Mass Movement in a Chinese Village*. New York, NY: All Saints. Esherick, Joseph. 1994. “Deconstructing the construction of the Party-State: Gulin County in the Shaan-Gan-Ning Border Region,”

criticism would have influences on the average villagers.¹⁰⁸ Different from the later red generation, the “new man” in land reform only embodied the changes initiated by the communists. At this point, every individual in the village had become a new man. Moreover, through fighting against mistakes, everyone turned out to be “docile” to the new state, and the socialist “new man” could only be created from these docile individuals.

¹⁰⁸ Madsen, Richard. 1984. *Morality and Power in a Chinese Village*.

Chapter Six

A New State from Mistakes:

Concluding Comments

Time starts! / 时间开始了!

----From *Shijian kaishi le*¹

When Mao Zedong declared the establishment of the People's Republic of China on Tiananmen on October 1, 1949, it was a belief shared by many Chinese people that it was to be the beginning of a new epoch, an epoch that would say farewell to the poor and backward past and set out for a bright future.² The achievements of Chinese communists also surprised the world at that time.³

In this concluding chapter, the processes of the land reform projects in three villages, Xigou, Beiwan, and Nancun would be reviewed firstly. The dynamics of identifying and correcting mistakes would be examined spatially as well as chronologically. Then the success of Chinese communists would be discussed with the communists' specific concern on mistakes. It would argue that the rectification

¹ "Shijian kaishi le" [Time starts, 时间开始了] is the title as well as the first sentence of a poem suite written by Hu Feng. Through describing the scene of the ceremony to celebrate the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the poet declared the beginning of time: a new epoch would start from that time point. The poem was originally published on "Renmin wenyi" [People's literature and arts, 人民文艺]. The supplement of Renmin riban [People's Daily, 人民日报], November 20, 1949.

² Li Shenzhi [李慎之], "Fengyu canghuang wushi nian" [The turbulent fifty years, 风雨苍黄五十年], viewed at <http://www.frchina.net/data/personArticle.php?id=255> (on 2007/12/20).

³ See Belden, Jack. 1949. *China Shakes The World*. New York, NY: Harper.

campaigns served as a disciplinary revolution for the new state that Chinese communists endeavored to build up. At this point, the significance of discipline in building up the modern state will be discussed. Finally, the characteristics of the new state built upon the fights against mistakes would be briefly delineated.

In general, mistakes might not be as welcome as the success. However, for Chinese communists, it was the mistakes that helped them to ground their power and to define the state they built up. The rectification campaigns were indispensable for Chinese communists to build up the state power at the grassroots. Therefore, the managements of mistakes are not only the way toward the success of a new state, but part of this success.

I. The Rectification Campaigns in the 1946-52 Land Reform

In 1946-1952, Chinese communists deliberately launched the land reform throughout the broad territories. However, this land reform was neither merely for land nor simply about land. Through redistributing land among villagers, the communists endeavored to initiate social and political transformations in rural China. The land redistribution projects served for the communists' aims to build up the state power in Chinese village. Based on the processes of land reform in the three villages, Xigou, Beiwan and Nancun, it seems that the identification and correction of mistakes was a constant concern of Chinese communists. The constant rectification campaigns characterized the evolution of the modern state that Chinese communists endeavored to build up.

Under the guidance of the 1946 May Fourth Directive, the communists carried out

the settling-accounts campaign in Xigou in early 1947. This campaign did help Xigou villagers to gain land and wealth from the former dominant landlord group. However, Xigou residents hardly followed the agenda set by the communists. They sabotaged the multi-village celebration by refusing to share the items confiscated from the landlords with peasants from other villages. Later on, the villagers converged to attack the corrupt local cadres, when they were mobilized to fight against the landlords—the enemies of the peasants portrayed by the communists. Similar chaos occurred in other base areas of the communists. Therefore, the communists called upon the rectifications. In Xigou, the corrupt local cadres were removed from their positions, and the communists also tried to explain their policies to the villagers by organizing mass meetings.

The mistakes in the settling-accounts campaigns also pushed the communists to formulate new directives. Through proclaiming equal-land redistribution among villagers, the 1947 Basic Law marked an abrupt turning of land reform. Violent attacks on landlords soon occurred in the neighboring areas of Xigou. In some places, the relatively rich peasants who worked on their own lands were also targeted. Therefore, the majority of the rural residents in the communist base area were under great pressure. In order to release the tension, the communists had to put the 1947 Basic Law aside, and launched a new rectification campaign. At that time, the efforts to correct the mistakes in Xigou were directly under the supervision of the central committee of the communist party.

While facing the troubles in Xigou, Chinese communists were new hands in carrying out the land redistribution projects. In this respect, the mistakes could be regarded as unintended consequences due to their lack of experiences. The two rectification campaigns then marked the communists' efforts to put things right. It

seemed that the communists might be able to do better in the following land redistribution projects carried in their later-liberated areas.

Under such circumstances, Beiwan was taken over by the communists in the fall of 1948. When the communists launched their land reform projects in the later-liberated areas like Beiwan, the two previous rectification campaigns in communist base areas must have furnished them with adequate experiences. The land reform project in Beiwan in fact could be regarded as the rectification campaign fighting against the mistakes in the previous campaign of a neighboring base area. On the one hand, local cadres who took charge of the previous campaign now came to direct the project in the later-liberated Beiwan. On the other hand, through identifying and correcting mistakes in the previous campaign, the communists had learned some lessons on how to mobilize the villager, how to avoid creating tensions in the village and so on. These lessons had influences on not only the policies formulated for the new project, but also the training on the newly-recruited personnel.

Compared with the projects in Xigou, the 1948 land redistribution in Beiwan was rather orderly. Villagers were ranked into different class categories, and the land inequality in Beiwan was resolved through the redistribution. In addition, new members were recruited into the communist party, and the village administration was then set up. However, complaints on the newly-promoted village leaders led to a rectification campaign in the winter of 1949. The previous orderly project, which resulted from the rectifications on the harsh projects in the base areas, was denounced by the county government. A rectification campaign was carried out intentionally to shelter the new leaders. Those who challenged the authority of the new leaders were criticized and

struggled as the hiding landlords. Although the county administration soon purged those new village leaders covertly, the labeled “hiding-landlords” did not rehabilitate their reputations in the village until the collapse of the ideology of class struggle in the 1980s.

Different from the chaotic land reform in Xigou, the land redistribution in Beiwan was carried out in the orderly and peaceful way. Before the villagers voiced their complaints against the new village leaders, the communists seemingly had no intention to launch a rectification campaign. However, the complaints of the villagers got on the communists’ nerves, and those complaints were then regarded as a challenge toward the newly-established order. Under such circumstance, the communists launched the rectification campaign, not to correct errors in land redistribution, but to punish these discontent villagers by labeling them “counter-revolutionaries”. Therefore, the identification of mistakes in the later-liberated areas should be regarded as a response to the dissidence from local communities. Here, the intentions of the rectifications were then primarily to defend the new social order promoting by the communists, instead of correcting the wrongdoings and putting things right.

It seemed that the rectification campaigns helped the communists to consolidate their rule over the later-liberated areas and to support the on-going war with their nationalist rivals. With their military victory, the communists marched down the south. Nancun was finally claimed by the communists when Mao Zedong declared the establishment of the central government of the People’s Republic on October 1, 1949. Now the communists were released from the pressure to wage war and could work on the new land reform policies deliberately. As a result, the 1950 Agrarian Law endeavored to facilitate agriculture production, while promoting the land redistribution projects in the

newly-liberated area.

The land reform in Nancun was also carried out in a rather orderly and peaceful way. Before redistributing land the communists launched the rent-reduction and interest-reduction campaign across the county of Nancun. Through organizing the peasants association and recruiting party members during this preparation period, the communists attempted to ground their power at the grassroots.

As a village located in the experimental area chosen by the provincial government, Nancun witnessed a well-planned campaign that was carried out step by step in the winter of 1950. The Nancun villagers did not make great efforts to sabotage or object the land redistribution in public. Local cadres were seemingly also satisfied with this result. Five months later, an examination campaign was launched only as a routinized step of land reform. However, the central government sensed the dangerous localism through the routinized examination. As a result, the provincial government started a series of rectification campaigns to overcome localism. The policymakers at the top, the executive personnel as the middlemen, and the ordinary villagers at the grassroots were all targeted in these fights against localism in 1952-1953. A number of villagers and local cadres were affected by the rectification campaigns. Similar to the Beiwan story, some people were announced as being mistreated during the rectifications in the 1980s.

As a village of the newly-liberated area, the land reform in Nancun was carried out after the establishment of the central government. The projects were well-planned and the campaigns were well-organized. Compared to the land reform projects in Xigou and Beiwan, the land redistribution in Nancun was orderly and successful. Neither the villagers nor local cadres sabotaged the projects in public. The villagers did not voice the

disapproval against the new orders, either. Although the following rectification campaigns were crucial for Nancun villagers and local cadres, the rectifications were originally carried out as a routinized step of land reform. In Xigou and Beiwan, the efforts to identify and correct mistakes were mainly reactive actions of the communists toward local practices. But in Nancun, the efforts to identify and correct mistakes were not the reactions to chaos or errors in the village. Firstly of all, the rectification campaign was launched as a regular follow-up step in land reform. By now, the efforts to identify and correct mistakes had become institutionalized into the routine administration of the communist state. Since then, a rectification campaigns would be launched as a routinized step almost after the execution of every policy.

The processes of the 1946-1952 land reform in these three villages reveal the progress made by Chinese communists. Table 3 presents a comparison of the rectifications in these three villages. While the communists continued to work on their land reform policies, the reactions from the villages had been taken into consideration. On the one hand, the various social and economic situations among the three villages affected the implementation of the land reform policies formulated by the communists deliberately. In this respect, the rectification campaigns could be regarded as the reactions toward the unintended consequences in local practices. On the other hand, the efforts to identify and correct mistakes in the three villages also witnessed the evolution of the communist state. The rectifications were developed from the managements of crisis in Xigou, to the corrective efforts targeting local objections in Beiwan, and finally a routinized technique of governance in Nancun.

Table 3: The variations of the three villages and their rectifications

		<u>Xigou</u>	<u>Beiwan</u>	<u>Nancun</u>
<i>before the land reform</i>	<i>land ownership</i>	the powerful big landlord family	small landholders & a few big landholders	clan land & family small plots
	<i>income sources of the village majority</i>	working as tenants and servants of the landlord family	working on the renting land and/or their own land	working on lineage land and lineage business
	<i>features of village life</i>	the patronage of the landlords	immigrant village	strong clan organizations
	<i>Wartime experience</i>	the communist base	the Japanese colony	the nationalist base
<i>the land reform</i>	<i>time</i>	1946-1948	1948-1950	1950-1952
	<i>policies</i>	1.the 1946 May Fourth Directive	the rectifications on the 1947 Basic Law	the 1950 Agrarian Law
		2. the 1947 Basic Law		
	<i>Mistakes identified</i>	1. the corrupt cadres & the self-organized villagers	the complaints on new village leaders from the “hiding” landlords	Localism (Local cadres protected landlords from struggles.)
2.the violent attacks on the landholders				
<i>The nature of the rectification</i>	the management of crisis	the reaction towards local objections	routine examination	

This dissertation argues that through identifying and correcting mistakes in previous campaigns, the rectification campaigns provided chances for the communists to educate and train the villagers, local cadres, and policy-makers. Through disciplining the different levels of the nascent state, the rectification campaigns facilitated the communists to ground their power over local communities. This project is a case study,

focusing on the experience of three villages. Of course, it is inappropriate to access the exact experiences of every inch of vast China, and to generalize the state building over China, based on these three cases. However, through studying the chronology of rectification in land reform, the dissertation opens a window to study the consistency and varieties of people's experiences in the process of building up the communist state. More case studies which cover the areas with variant socio-economical backgrounds, such as the rural areas in the Yang-tze delta and the villages located in the competing areas of the communists and the Japanese during the resistance war, would provide further insights into the building-up of the communist state.⁴ Moreover, although in the 1950s, the majority of the Chinese population lived in the rural area, the disciplinary practices in the cities and especially within factories should also be taken into consideration.⁵

II. The Success and Mistakes of Chinese Communists

Through the 1946-1952 land reform, Chinese communists successfully completed the task of building a modern state at the grassroots. The establishment of the administrative power over rural China drew great attention from scholars. Scholars examined the efforts of Chinese communists in establishing the bureaucracy, the grass-root organizations, and the propaganda machine which ensured the popular acceptance of

⁴ The research on the villages in the Yang-tze delta or those located in the competing areas of the communists and the Japanese during the resistance war have been covered by many studies. See Chen, Yung-fa. 1986. *Making Revolution: the Communist Movement in Eastern and Central China, 1937-1945*. Friedman, Edward, Paul G. Pickowicz, and Mark Selden. 1991. *Chinese Village, Socialist State*.

⁵ Lieberthal, Kenneth. 1980. *Revolution And Tradition In Tientsin, 1949-1952*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. Perry, Elizabeth. 1993. *Shanghai on Strike: The Politics of Chinese Labor*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

the communist ideologies.⁶ At this point, the leaders of Chinese communist party were portrayed as the major and sole actors in building up the state power from the center to the periphery.

However, the nature of the state builders was portrayed in various ways. Some scholars see the state built by the communists as a rationalized power. Therefore, the expansion and penetration of the administrative power at the local level facilitated the rationalized state builders to exchange loyalties and commitments from the people with material and moral incentives.⁷ Other scholars provide a completely different portrayal. The power that Chinese communists built at the local level is believed to rely on guns and violence, and the people remained cynical and suspicious at the new state.⁸ The arguments on the totalitarianism of the state built up by Chinese communists were based on accounts of the later group.⁹

With the opening up of fieldwork in China, scholars brought out a new trend in studying the building-up of the communist state in China. By shifting the focus to local communities, scholars shed light on the social transformations at local levels as well as the local practices of the state power.¹⁰ Although the establishment of local administration is still valued, the state's top-down blueprint is not dominant in these

⁶ Schurmann, Franz. 1968. *Ideology and Organization in Communist China*.

⁷ Shue, Vivienne. 1980. *Peasant China in Transition: The Dynamics of Development toward Socialism, 1949-1956*.

⁸ See Yang, C. K. 1959a. *The Chinese Family in the Communist Revolution*. Cambridge: M.I.T. Press.
Yang, C. K. 1959b. *A Chinese Village in Early Communist Transition*. Cambridge: M. I. T. Press.

⁹ Linz, Juan. and Stepan Alfred. 1996. *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*.

¹⁰ See Chan, Anita. Richard Madsen, and Unger, J. 1984. *Chen Village: the Recent History of a Peasant Community in Mao's China*. Friedman, Edward, Paul G. Pickowicz, and Mark Selden. 1991. *Chinese Village, Socialist State*.

studies. Instead, the interactions between the state and local communities become the major concern in studying the expansion of China's state power. On the one hand, the state had to pay attention to local traditions in executing its power. On the other hand, through their interpretations of the state policies, local actors, especially the elites promoted by the state, were able to appropriate state policies for their own sake.¹¹

While the focus has been shifted from the absolute party leaders to local communities, the establishment of state apparatus at the grassroots still contributes to explain the success of Chinese communists in building up their power through China. At the same time, the mistakes the communists made also catch the attention of scholars. It has been argued that the communists sometimes experienced disastrous results in their efforts. The scholarship studying the mistakes of Chinese communists in the process to build up a new state can be grouped into two schools. One group focuses on the mistakes in policy-making, while the other emphasizes the implementation of the policies at grassroots.

Some scholars argue that the mistakes the communists made originated from the unrealistic policies, especially the class differentiation policies during land reform.¹² The “representational reality” within the communist policies was not in accordance with the “objective reality” of China at that time. The gap between these two kinds of “realities” inevitably led to the occurrences of mistakes when the policies were initiated in local communities. From this point, these scholars argue that the discrepancies between the “representational reality” and the “objective reality” are responsible for the final collapse

¹¹ Madsen, Richard. 1984. *Morality and Power in a Chinese Village*.

¹² Huang, Philip. 1995. “Rural Class Struggle in the Chinese Revolution: Representational and Objective Realities from the Land Reform to the Cultural Revolution.”

of the communist ideology in the 1980s, which was portrayed as the failure of Chinese communists.

On the contrary, the scholars focusing on local practices tend to understand the continuous rectification campaigns as an evidence of the flexibility of the state power.¹³ Moreover, it is even argued that the continuous fights against the mistakes were the deliberate strategies of the communists to impose their power on local communities step by step.¹⁴ When the communists just stepped into the village, they chose to tolerate the local communities to pursue their own interests. As soon as the communists had rooted their power in the communities by establishing their agents, the second step was adopted and villagers were harshly treated. The previous actions which were tolerated before now became the targets of the rectification campaigns. Finally, in order to placate the villagers who suffered from the second step, a new round of rectification campaign was launched again.

The scholars studying the mistakes in the communists' efforts to build up their power at the grassroots, in fact, all portray the communists as the sole actors who should take responsibilities or get credit for the identification and correction of mistakes. However, through examining the process of creating mass participation to discipline different level of the emerging communist state, this dissertation regarded the mistakes in land reform as the results of the interactions among the top state builders, the intermediate cadres, and local communities. At this point, the continuous identification and correction of mistakes imposed a series of normalizing training on all these actors

¹³ Shue, Vivienne. 1980. *Peasant China in Transition: The Dynamics of Development toward Socialism, 1949-1956*.

¹⁴ Pepper, Suzanne. 1978. *Civil War in China: The Political Struggle, 1945-1949*.

during the state building process. The whole range of villages and the whole range of the state apparatus were put under examination in the rectifications. Through educating and training local people as well as the state officials on how to behave themselves, the rectification enforced a disciplinary revolution at each level of the state. This disciplinary revolution would facilitate the state to build up its state apparatus and to ground its power at the grassroots. Those are the reasons that the communists put great efforts in identifying and correcting mistakes during their state building process and the later administration.

Through focusing on the rectifications, this dissertation endeavors to demonstrate how the communists integrate levels of people across the diverse villages and regions into the new state. The continuous rectification campaigns imposed a series of normalizing training on people at different levels, the top leaders, the intermediate executive cadres, and also different groups of the ordinary villagers. Through identifying and correcting mistakes, people at different levels were disciplined and trained, which laid the foundations for the new state and finally enabled the modern state to penetrate into local communities. Moreover, the communist efforts in identifying and correcting mistakes constructed the pedagogic role of the new state. In this respect, the state that the communist built up is not only a coercive administrative organization but also a pedagogical and corrective organization. The power of the communist state “does not operate exclusively, or primarily, through coercion,” but also operates through interaction and cooperation within local communities.¹⁵

¹⁵ Gorski, Philip. 2002, *The Disciplinary Revolution*, pp.165-166.

III. Discipline and the Rectifications

The rectification campaigns in the 1946-1952 land reform projects of Chinese communists imposed the systematic examinations and normalizing trainings on people at different levels over the broad territories. Through identifying and correcting mistakes in the local implementation of the land reform policies, the communists regulated people's conducts not only at the grassroots level but also among the local cadres and the top leaders. These efforts facilitated to ground the state power at each levels of the state from the grassroots up to the local executives and even to the top state-builders. In this respect, the rectification campaigns served as the disciplinary revolution to promote a new set of discipline for the building-up of the communist state.

In Gorski's study on the formation of the western European modern states, the disciplinary revolution launched by the Protestant Reformation is believed to create "new mechanism for the production of social and political order."¹⁶ By putting people under surveillance—self observation, mutual observation, and hierarchical observation, the Protestant Reformation created "more obedient and industrious subjects with less coercion and violence" and then created a more disciplined polity.¹⁷ Gorski argues that through a general expansion of state infrastructure and a progressive rationalization of social-political ethics the Protestant reformation increased not only the regulatory power of the state but also its extractive and coercive capacities.

Encouraged by Gorski's study, this dissertation endeavors to illuminate the disciplinary practice in the state building of Chinese communists. This dissertation

¹⁶ Gorski, Philip. 2002, *The Disciplinary Revolution*, p.xvi.

¹⁷ Ibid.

argues that through identifying and correcting mistakes in the implementation of land reform policies at grassroots, the rectification campaigns contributed to create the systematic surveillance over different levels of the new state. The state personnel and the local people were all under the hierarchical observations. In addition, these hierarchical observations were carried out with the efforts to correct mistakes. Through the efforts fighting against the mistakes, the communist state demonstrated its role as the absolute judge of people's behavior. Through the rectifications, people got to know and finally acknowledged the power the state. In this respect, the public resistances were muffled, and local people as well as the state personnel chose to avoid confrontations against state. As a result, the obedient local communities as well as the more efficient state apparatus governing over these obedient communities were created for the new state.

Different from the Protestant Reformation which changed people's belief system, the disciplinary revolution in China's state building was carried out by political leaders. In the western European countries, the religious changes had effects on economy and political system. The creation of the disciplined modern state is more accidental, instead of intentional. However, in the Chinese case, the state was built up intentionally. The communists made great efforts to build up their power at grassroots. Therefore, significant differences could be observed in the outcomes of the disciplinary revolutions in the western European country and the communist China. The Protestant Reformation successfully created obedient subjects who internalized the religious beliefs into their daily behaviors. In contrast, the obedient subjects created by Chinese communists were more superficial. Most of the people just followed the regulations set by the communist state and behaved as the state expected. Although the changes in daily behaviors had not

touched their souls at this time, the communist state still claimed pastoral care over people's behaviors.

In the 1946-1952 land reform, the criticism and self-criticism were mainly practices among the communist functionaries. To local people, the main changes initiated by the rectification campaigns in land reform were grounded at the direct involvements of the state power into the village affairs. The criticism and self-criticism among the average villagers had not yet become the popular practices at the grassroots until the late 1960s when the new generation had been raised up under the red flag of the communist state. But it was through the rectifications in the 1946-1952 land reform that the communist state imposed hierarchical observations and corrections over each level of the state. This hierarchical disciplinary revolution laid the foundations of the communist state. On the one hand, through the coercive institutional discipline, the rectification campaigns provided competent personnel for the newly-established institutions. On the other hand, the rectification campaigns also initiated the endeavor to promote the self-discipline of each individual. Although the rectification campaigns might not touch people's soul, the efforts did regulate people's behaviors.

Through reviewing the rectification campaigns in the communist land reform project as a whole and in the concrete practices of three villages specifically, this project highlights the corrective aspect of discipline and its contribution to build up the modern state. Identifying and correcting mistakes have its history in China as well as in the western European countries. The emphasis on correcting mistakes in the state-building project of Chinese communists shed light on the significance of the corrective aspect of discipline. In Gorski's four types of discipline, he points out that discipline could be

imposed as the coercion to correct, which could be operated at the social level as well as the individual level.¹⁸ The rectification campaigns in the 1946-1952 land reform started as a coercive institutional discipline at the social level, which initiated the similar coercive discipline at the individual level—corrective discipline. The individuals who were responsible to the mistakes were targeted during the rectification. As a result, a normative discipline at individual level—self-discipline—regulated the average people's behaviors, both at the grassroots and within the state apparatus.

The rectification campaigns in China's state-building would arouse concerns on the mistake-correction process in the formation of modern state in other locations. Fighting against mistakes may also be an important part of the state-building projects of the early-established modern state in west Europe. The correction of the errors was a constant concern of the church.¹⁹ But the possible continuities or changes of the corrective discipline do not attract attention in Gorski's study on the connections between the protestant reformation and the emergence of modern state in Western Europe. At this point, this study on the rectification campaigns in China's state building project might contribute to explore the corrective practices of the modern state.

This dissertation has made efforts to study the rectification campaigns in the land reform projects. However, the efforts in identifying and correcting mistakes in this period were not unique for the communists. Chinese communists had paid special attention on the rectifications since its establishment. The rectification campaigns had been carried out in the communist base areas in the 1930s (*sufan*) and in the early 1940s

¹⁸ Gorski, Philip. 2002, *The Disciplinary Revolution*, p.33.

¹⁹ See Le Roy Ladurie, Emmanuel. 1978. *Montaillou: the promised land of Error*. New York, NY: G. Braziller.

(*zhengfeng*). After the land reform, the fight against mistakes continued in numerous projects, such as the campaigns to fighting against the wrongdoings among the officials and the state-owned enterprise (*sanfan*) and among the private sectors (*wufan*) in the early 1950s. In the later 1950s, the anti-rightist campaign (*fanyou*) lunched a rectification campaign mainly among the intellectuals.

Fighting against the mistakes was a constant concern of Chinese communists. The rectification campaigns in the 1946-1952 land reform were distinctive of the hierarchical corrective practices over through the broad territories for the first time. Not only the cadres were objects of the rectifications, but also the local people were put under the surveillance. However, at this stage, the criticism and self-criticism among the average villagers had not become a requirement in the land reform projects. Till the new generation had been raised up under the red flag, such self-discipline had become the popular practices over local communities. Therefore, in order to explore the disciplinary techniques of the communist state, an overall study on the rectification campaigns after the building-up of the communist state is necessary.

IV The New State from Rectifications

Through identifying and correcting mistakes during the 1946-1952 land reform, Chinese communists successfully built up the power of the new state at the grassroots. The authority of the communists was built up from the “mistakes,” and later on in a long time the rectification was institutionalized as a routine procedure for the communists to execute their policies.

Through initiating the rectification campaigns, Chinese communists in fact

acknowledged their concerns on the reactions from local communities. At this point, the rectification campaigns intensified the communists' intention to mobilize the mass to participate into their projects. In the 1946-1952 land reform, the communist party tried to mobilize ordinary people to take part in the building of the state, and then integrated them into the state. As the reactive steps of the previous campaign, the rectification campaigns signified the participation of local actors. Local people did participate in building up the new order in their community, and had been integrated into newly-established local organizations and then into the new state. Since then, the mass mobilization through participation had been an efficient technique for the communists to run the state in their later projects.²⁰ At this point, the rectifications were routinized until the communists completely gave up the mass movement as the basic technique to run the state in the 1980s.

Recent scholarship reveals that local practices in general always deviate from state policies when the modern state expands its administrative power down to local communities. Sometimes well-intentioned plans would go tragically awry in some countries.²¹ However, in China, while the mistakes during the process to build up the state power were treated as the targets of the state, the mistakes at the grassroots did not fail the new state. Instead, the efforts to identify and correct the mistakes contributed to discipline the people at different levels and then integrate individuals into the new state. Therefore, the efforts targeting the mistakes in fact constitute as a substantial technique of

²⁰ Bernstein, Thomas. 1970. "Leadership and Mass Mobilization in the Soviet and Chinese Collectivization Campaign of 1929-30 and 1955-56," in *China Quarterly*, no. 31: pp.1-47.

²¹ Scott, James. 1998. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven, MD: Yale University Press.

governance for the communists. Through defining the right and the wrong, the disciplinary revolution was enforced for the new state. Thus, we can say, the mistakes define the state instead of following it. Time starts when mistakes are targeted.

APPENDICES

Glossary of Chinese Terms

- aiguo gongliang 爱国公粮
baojia 保甲
Beishan 北山
Beiwang 北湾
Bohai 渤海
Cai 蔡
chujian 锄奸
cun gongsuo 村公所
dang zhibu 党支部
dizhuwo 地主窝
budebu 不得不
bu shang yi ke 补上一课
daotong 道统
fang 房
fanyou 反右
fucha 复查
geng du wei ben 耕读为本
geng zhe you qi tian 耕者有其田
guo 国
guojia 国家
He 何
Hu 胡
jia 家
jiapu 家谱
jiashengfan 夹生饭
jiaxun 家训
jin 斤
jiupian 纠偏
jinggandui 警干队
jianzu jianxi 减租减息
juntianzhi 均田制
kaiming dizhu 开明地主
kaming renshi 开明人士
kao shan chi shan, kao hai chi hai
靠山吃山, 靠海吃海
lao jiefangqu 老解放区
lao qu 老区
leijin shuizhi 累进税制
lijia 里甲
lijin ju 厘金局
longwang she 龙王社
Ma 马
minju 民局
mu 亩
Nancun. 南村
pingjun diquan 平均地权
pinnong tuan 贫农团
Qing 清
Qin Shihuang 秦始皇
qingfei fanba 清匪反霸
qingsuan 清算
Qiong Wang 穷王
Qiong Li 穷李
qiuyu 求雨
qu 区
renmin zhengquan 人民政权
sanfan 三反
sansan zhi 三三制
sanxi 三溪
sanqingtuan 三青团
sao tangzi 扫堂子
Shaan-Gan-Ning bianqu 陕甘宁边区
shang 垧
Shanhaiguan 山海关
shecang 社仓
shen zhong zhui yuan 慎终追远
shidian 试点

shuihui 水会
 shishen 士绅
 shuang jian 双减
 sufan 肃反
 tankuan 摊款
 tiaomu 条目
 tudi geming 土地革命
 tudi gaige 土地改革
 tudizheng 土地证
 tugai 土改
 tugai zhengdui 土改整队
 wufan 五反
 Xigou 西沟
 xiangyue 乡约
 xiang 乡
 xiaohegou 小河沟

xiao qin you lin 孝亲友邻
 xin jiefang qu 新解放区
 xin qu 新区
 xinzheng 新政
 xuetong 学统
 Zhao 赵
 zhengdang 整党
 zhengfeng 整风
 zhenggou 征购
 zhengtong 政统
 zhi 支
 zhong ti xi yong 中体西用
 zongli yamen 总理衙门
 zhongyang genju di 中央根据地
 zhushi 主事
 zuchang 祖偿

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List of Interview

Xigou

XG199708201MZQ
XG199708211GZM
XG199708212MSY
XG199808213GCD
XG199708222GZM
XG199708223MYJ
XG199708261LCG

XG199708263MYT
XG199805153MYJ
XG199805261LZY
XG199805291LXL
XG200001041LZY
XG200001121YZW
XG200001122LZY

XG200001141RQL
XG200001142TXL
XG200001153MRY
XG200001162SXY
XG200001163LCZ
XG20000172YZW
XG200510241MZY

Beiwai

BW199807081WZ
BW199807082ZWQ
BW199807083ZZX.
BW199807084ZFY
BW199807091LYS
BW199807092HYQ
BW199807093HXC
BW199807101YX
BW199807102ZZX

BW199807111WZ
BW199807121GYZ
BW199807141LSZ
BW199807181XGY
BW200512302ZJD
BW200601031ZJD
BW200607151WZJ
BW200607191YT
BW200607193ZJB

BW200607201GYZ
BW200607242GZC
BW200607252YZX
BW200607291ZJY
BW200607301YT
BW200607311WZ
BW20060801LYH
BW200608041HDW
BW200608071ZJD

Nancun

NC200407221HSC
NC200408211HML
NC200603272XZC
NC200603302HSC
NC200603311KQD
NC200604014HPQ
NC200604021HST
NC200604031HZH

NC200604033HST
NC200604041HZR
NC200604062KQD
NC200604072HHL
NC200604093HHL
NC200604111HZL
NC200604121HZH
NC200604131HJS

NC200604132HJY
NC200604141HJN
NC200604163KQD
NC200604171HJH
NC200604181CYQ
NC200604182KQD