Rural Reconstruction:

by

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Maps and Illustrations

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Abbreviations

CBA Cixi Bureau of Archive
CCP The Chinese Communist Party
CGJYYK *Chongguang Jiaoyu Yuekan* [The Monthly Journal of Education after Liberation]
CXJYZ *Cixi Jiaoyu Zhi* [The Gazetteer of Cixi Education]
CXXZ *Cixi Xianzhi* [Cixi Gazetteer]
ZBA Zhejiang Bureau of Archive
Acknowledgments

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Introduction

"Each person, according to his profession and position, each according to his intelligence and ability, must aid in the work of reforming social customs, modernizing political practices, and cultivating the concept of freedom and government by law, and must unite in the work of national reconstruction—that is, reconstruction in the five fields of psychology, ethics, society, politics, and economics."

—Chiang Kai-shek, China's Destiny

In early 1943, the Nationalist government abolished the "unequal treaties" with the American and British governments and regained its judicial independence as the foreign powers relinquished their extraterritorial rights. Nazi Germany suffered great loss from the Battle of Stalingrad, and the Japanese empire began losing its momentum in the Pacific Wars after the defeat of the Guadalcanal Campaign. Chiang Kai-shek, the leader of the Nationalist government, believed that the time for Chinese people to strike back at the Japanese and to recover the national sovereignty had come. First published in March 1943, Chiang's book China's Destiny showed his ambition of defeating the Japanese and rebuilding China. He visualized a modern economy, an independent sovereignty, and free, liberal, and moral citizens.

Few people remembered the Nationalist government's final effort of building a modern state. The government lost the Civil War against the Chinese Communist Party, and political leaders departed for the island of Taiwan. Chiang dreamed of restoring the mainland but never accomplished this goal before his death in 1975. Communist historians eulogized the socialist victory and constructed a narrative of a

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dichotomy between a revolutionary savior and a corrupted regime. The loser of the Civil War was reduced to an aggregation of corruption, military incompetence, political illegitimacy, and economic disaster.

This thesis challenges the old narratives of failure associated with the Nationalist regime and studies its post-war state building project. Focusing on Cixi county in eastern Zhejiang province, this case study seeks to address three major issues. First, it examines how the socioeconomic setting of the rural society under the collaborationist regime shaped the post-war development of political and educational institutions. This thesis broadens our understanding of the legacy of the Japanese occupation in rural China beyond economic destruction and exploitation. Second, this study analyzes the patterns of peasant behavior and explains why individuals evaded taxes and joined collective resistance against tax escalation or wrongdoing. By bringing the agency back to peasants, I seek alternative ways of conceptualizing the state-society relations during the Republican era. While most scholars view peasants as passive victims of the state expansion, I argue that they were disruptors of the state’s agenda and resourceful individuals who defined and actualized their own goals. Finally, this study examines the interaction among governors, legislators, and the gentry over the educational development and explores the social meaning of citizenship. The tale of rural construction in Cixi illuminated the state’s failure to reconcile conflicting interests and actualize its political vision of state-led civic republicanism.

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The Setting

Cixi, in the heart of the cotton-producing region in Zhejiang Province, was next to the Hangzhou Bay and close to the Ningbo port. It was economically tied to the trade route between Ningbo and Shanghai. The opening of Ningbo port after the First Opium War stimulated local commercialization and the rise of bigger towns for trade. Economic prosperity drove many merchants to migrate to Cixi and to conduct their commercial activities. Based on the 1933 census, the population density of Zhejiang Province was 67 people per square kilometer, while Cixi had a much higher population density that reached 111.29 people per square kilometer. Many Cixi merchants also owned their businesses in Shanghai and formed occupation guilds. This community had a powerful influence in Shanghai finance and trade and contributed to the Cixi communities by donating resources to public infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, and refugee shelters. 3,826 Cixi businessmen lived in Shanghai in 1946, and the number must have been much higher during the pre-war period as many ran away after the Japanese occupied Shanghai in 1937.

Cixi had a primarily agrarian economy with cotton and rice as two major crops. In 1946, the total production per capita was 5.9 dan of rice and exceeded the provincial average number 3.44. The average cultivation area for a household was

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3 The Editorial Committee of Cixi Gazetteer, Cixi Xianzhi 慈溪县志 [Cixi Gazetteer] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang People's Publishing House, 1992), 472. This source is hereafter cited as CXXZ.
4 Ge Suicheng 葛綏成, Fensheng Dizhi Zhejiang 分省地志浙江 [Zhejiang Gazetteer] (Kunming: Zhonghua Book Company, 1939), 62, 64, 68.
6 Ningbo Lvhu Tongxianghui Yuekan 7 (1946).
around eight \textit{mu}, slightly lower than the provincial average number.\textsuperscript{7} Urban inhabitants and cotton growing peasants owned or rented the smallest area of land for rice cultivation in Cixi.\textsuperscript{8} Cotton peasants lived in the Northern part of the county, where alluvial land created ideal conditions for cultivation. By 1946, the total area of cultivation was 101,500 \textit{mu} and the total production reached 1,597 tons. The post-war total amount of cotton production was two times smaller than that during the pre-war period.\textsuperscript{9} Some peasants also lived in mountainous areas that were not suitable for cropping and made livings by selling firewood. Siming mountain was one of the two major mountains in Cixi with a length of thirty kilometers and a height between five hundred and six hundred feet. Another mountain was called Gouyu, which had a forty-five kilometers length and a less than six hundred feet height.\textsuperscript{10} Overall, the Communist land survey showed that 1,764 landlords and 74,662 tenants lived in Cixi.\textsuperscript{11}

Kinship was the basic social fabric of a rural community. In most villages, one large descent group dominated the public life and coexisted with several other small descent groups.\textsuperscript{12} Approximately forty-three households lived in a village and they

\textsuperscript{8} Cixi Bureau of Archive (cited hereafter as CBA), Jiu 1-004-021, 5-14; Zhejiang Bureau of Archive (cited hereafter as ZBA), L030-000-090, Gexian Xiangzhen Zhang Baojia Bianzhi Ji Zizhi Renyuan Yilanbiao 各縣鄉鎮長保甲編制及自治人員一覽表 [Baojia System and Officials in Every Town].
\textsuperscript{9} CXXZ, 246-248.
\textsuperscript{11} CXXZ, 214.
\textsuperscript{12} CBA, Jiu 1-002-067, Jiu 1-002-068, Jiu 1-002-091, Jiu 1-002-092, Jiu 1-002-093.
generally lacked strong association with individuals from other villages. The gentry from the large descent group were traditional village leaders and they determined communal affairs such as education and irrigation system. Most gentry were individuals who studied for the civil service exam but failed to gain official positions.

Figure 1. Today’s Cixi

13 “Cixi Renkou Tongji,” 8; CXXZ, 17.
The local communities had a long-standing commitment to education. Since the late Qing period, the gentry were active in transforming churches and traditional Chinese educational institutions into Western-style schools. Cixi primary schools had high student enrollment and abundant economic resources in early Nanjing Decade (1927-1937). As table 1 illustrates, the incomes and expenditures of rural schools were two times higher than the provincial average numbers. Schools were able to build advanced infrastructures and to hire qualified teachers. The spending on each student was two times higher than the provincial average level, and teachers’ salaries were three times higher than the average salary of a Zhejiang rural teacher. Before the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), the number of faculty members and total expenditures of Cixi primary schools continued growing at a rate above the provincial average level. Although the county government's spending on education stayed at the provincial average level, local merchants and gentry provided schools with most of their funding. Even when the collaborationist regime significantly

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16 Ibid., 767, 769; The Committee of Cixi Education, Cixi Jiaoyu Zhi 慈溪教育志 [The Gazetteer of Cixi Education] (Cixi, 1993), 46-47. This source is cited hereafter as CXJYZ; The Cixi People's Political Consultative Conference, edit., Cixi Wenshi Ziliao Diba Ji: Jiaoyu Ziliao Zhuanji 慈溪文史资料第 8 辑: 教育资料专辑 [The Recollections of Cixi Culture and History Volume 8: Education], 4-7.
17 The Nationalist Party unified China in 1927 and set its capital at Nanjing.
reduced its spending on education after 1941, many local elites still tried to sustain primary schools regardless of their financial predicament.²⁰

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<th>County data</th>
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<td>Number of teachers</td>
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<td>School expenditures</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

Table 1. The Data of Primary Schools in Zhejiang Province and Cixi County (1929)

**State Building during the Republican Era**

The existing literature has identified two patterns of state making in rural societies during the Nanjing Decade. In North China, the state penetration led to the breakdown of traditional community leadership and rampant exploitation of peasants. The economic modernization and bureaucratic expansion increased the tax burden and forced the gentry to withdraw their leadership and to avoid becoming unpopular tax collectors. The installation of sub-county governmental bodies also deprived the gentry of decision-making power on communal affairs and further discouraged them to serve the state. Many bandits and local warlords, as a result, filled the political vacuum and levied illegitimate taxes on peasants.²¹ Historian Prasenjit Duara calls this simultaneous expansion of the formal and informal structure of the state as the

²⁰CXJYZ, 47; CXXZ, 524-525.
"state involution". The state had a very weak control over local agents who were only interested in maximizing their self-interest. The failure to formalize the traditional tax farming practices even led to the armed resistance of the entire village against tax payment in some regions.

In comparison with the disruptive nature of state building in North China, the state exhibited its capacity of collaborating with local societies and regulating economic activities in Jiangnan. The stable ecological conditions and advanced commercial activities secured the state's fiscal revenues and reduced its incentives to heighten the tax burden. The expanded bureaucracy formalized strong descent groups in rural societies and the gentry continued serving as the leaders of developing public projects and executing the state's policies. As the level of solidarity in Jiangnan villages was much higher than that in North China, the state penetration did not fundamentally change the pre-existing power structure. Local elites also took the initiative in modernizing education and worked with the state to reform traditional Chinese schools. Jiangnan became the forerunner of economic and political modernization during the Nanjing Decade.

The scholarship on the Nationalist state building project during the 1940s was very limited. After the beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese War, the Nationalist regime lost substantial territory and moved its capital to Chongqing in Sichuan.

province. To consolidate its control over rural societies and to mobilize physical and human resources, the state created a new political system named the "new county system" (xin xianzhi) in 1939 and implemented it for a decade. This political reform not only extended the reach of governmental bodies to villages, but also created political mechanisms for the masses to participate in communal affairs and to supervise power holders. Although the levels of power penetration and popular political participation were unprecedented, most Western scholars ignore the political development in rural societies and focus on national politics or grand battles.

Chinese scholars have done several case studies on the implementation of the "new county system" and focused on the success and failure of institutions, but few of them are engaged with theoretical and historiographical issues.

This case study seeks to contribute to our understanding of the Nationalist state building in two aspects. One is to examine the impact of the Japanese occupation on peasant behavior and institutional development after the end of the Second Sino-Japanese War. Some work has been done on the Japanese control over rural societies and they examine how the Japanese and collaborationists built organizations and


28 Cao Chengjian 曹成建, "Shilun 20 Shiji 40 Niandai Sichuan Xinxianzhxi Xiade Jiceng Minyi Jigou" 试论 20 世纪 40 年代四川新县制下的基层民意机构 [Representative Institutions under the New County System in Sichuan during the 1940s], Journal of Sichuan Normal University (Social Sciences Edition) 28, no.5 (2001): 89-95; Xiao, Minguo Shiqi De Baojia Yu Xiangcun Shehui Zhili.
extracted resources from rural communities. Historians agree that the collaborationist regime was a predatory state against peasants.29 This study does not treat peasants as the passive victims of imperial exploitation but analyzes their interaction with different powers. Peasants determined their strategies based on their perception of the wider sociopolitical world and selected tax evasion as their survival strategy to retain scarce resources.30 The tragedies of tax evasion continued after the end of occupation partly because peasants did not perceive the changes of political environment. To fully understand the historical experience of the Japanese occupation, it is necessary to study refugees as well as individuals who chose to stay in their villages.31

Moreover, this study extends institutional analysis beyond 1945 and examines how the Nationalist government adopted and modified Japanese systems in its rural reconstruction planning. The focus of the legacy of occupation shifted from economic destruction to the institutional path of the Nationalist regime.32 I argue that the collaborationist regime created unfavorable conditions, specifically economic depression, corruption, political fragmentation and weak control over land, for rural reconstruction and made the Nationalist state create cost-saving and decentralized institutions. Resource shortage forced the county government to expedite tax

29 Duara, Culture, Power and the State, Chapter 8; Timothy Brook, Collaboration: Japanese Agents and Local Elites in Wartime China (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), Chapter 7; Zhu Dexin 朱德新, Ershi Shiji Sansishi Niandai Henan Yidong Baojia Zhidu Yanjiu [The Analysis of Baojia System in Henan Yidong during the 1930s and 1940s] (Beijing: China Social Science Press, 2008).
30 Perry, Rebels and Revolutions in North China, 2.
32 This idea is inspired by Douglass North's concept of "path dependence". North argues that any institutional change will be created upon the proceeding institutional setting and the lessons from previous experiments. See Douglass C. North, Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 86-87, 95.
collection by lowering the qualification of official recruitment and shortening the length of training. There was no standardization of tax accounting and enforcement at the village level. The government also lacked sufficient wealth to finance public schools and therefore ceded its control over school funding to encourage rural communities to engage in educational reconstruction. On the other hand, as collaborationists, bandits, and communists ruled over different regions in Cixi and practiced distinct fiscal policies during the occupation, the Nationalist government could not determine a uniform tax rate and had to let rural communities figure out their fiscal demands. Likewise, the local state took a bottom-up approach to rebuild schools because illegal possession of school properties was rampant before the liberation. Local communities possessed the knowledge of ownership changes and gained legal assistance from the county government.

The stock of legible knowledge and transaction costs determined the efficiency of institutions.\(^{33}\) A subject became legible as the state simplified, codified, and archived local practices.\(^{34}\) In Cixi, local governments designed distinct tax policies, enforcement logistics, and accounting books. The lack of standardization created barriers for the local state's agents to capture a holistic picture of fiscal revenues and to intervene in a tax controversy. Illegible knowledge then increased the transaction cost of tax collection, specifically the costs of investigating and enforcing tax payment. In any individual tax evasion case, the state's agents must first be

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\(^{33}\) Economist Douglass North defines "transaction cost" as "the costs of measuring the valuable attributes of what is being exchanged and the costs of protecting rights and policing and enforcing agreements." See North, *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance*, 27.

familiarized with the local tax accounting techniques, terminologies, and paperwork. The loopholes in the fiscal system also made it difficult to make accurate calculations and to enforce the tax payment. Likewise, the local state lacked a consistent system to check the power of rural communities in public schools and relied on teachers and school principals to execute educational policies. The enforcement, however, became ineffective if teachers and principals followed the interest of villagers. The Japanese occupation, therefore, led to the development of inefficient institutions in post-war Cixi.

The second major contribution is to put peasants at the center of the analysis and to reinterpret their role in the state building process. Most works focus on the state's policy design and implementation and its interaction with the local elite, and they either ignore peasants or treat them as the passive recipients of the state's projects. In Cixi, however, the county government regarded peasants as the source of its strength and took a bottom-up approach to rebuild its fiscal and educational systems. Peasants not only participated in local politics by electing town officials and formulating fiscal policies, but also gained the supervisory power over local officials. Peasants also became the pioneer of educational reconstruction and obtained great autonomy in managing school funding. On the other hand, they were the source of the political and economic predicament during the post-war period. Many peasants evaded taxes and obstructed policy enforcement. They also disagreed with the state's educational ideology and refused to make a commitment to educational development. In addition, peasants took collective action to defend their interest against local officials and
challenged the power structure of rural communities. Peasant activism in post-war Cixi provides us with new insight into state-society relations in Republican China.

This study seeks to bridge structure with agency to understand why peasants evaded taxes. Peasants were rational agents who made their decisions based on the evaluation of the expected utility of each outcome.\(^\text{35}\) Poverty and the loopholes in the fiscal system provided peasants with economic incentives to commit unlawful acts. Borrowing from the game theory, I also argue that peasants mistrusted local officials and both sides were trapped in a prisoner’s dilemma situation.\(^\text{36}\) The purpose of tax evasion for an individual peasant was to improve economic security and to minimize the risk and cost of economic exploitation. The analysis will then focus on how the county government, its sub-level organizations, and the county court coordinated with each other and created a system to overcome tax evasion. The interaction between peasants and institutions shed light on the social structure of rural villages and illuminated how peasants deciphered unwritten rules of the legal procedure and determined their strategies based on these rules.

In addition to evading taxes, individual peasants joined collective resistance against tax escalation and wrongdoing. In most cases, peasants from an entire village joined collective action under the leadership of a wealthy tenant. When peasant leaders received unfair treatment from power holders, villagers united and attempted to rescue them from the detention center. In his classic work, Mancur Olson argues


that "unless there is coercion or some other special device to make individuals act in their common interests, rational, self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interests." To overcome the free-rider problem, political leaders must treat group members discriminatively by positive inducements or punishments so that rational agents will have the incentive to pursue the overarching goal of the group.\textsuperscript{37} While this theory may be true for zero-sum public goods, many public goods in the world are non-zero-sum that do not provide individuals with decreasing benefits as the group enlarges.\textsuperscript{38} Without selective incentives, an individual peasant was still motivated to participate in the collective action because his action would lead to a higher chance of a successful tax resistance and the benefit of tax exemption would not decline as the group enlarged. As the archival documents illustrate, wealthy tenants did not introduce mechanisms to overcome the free-rider problem but served as the leaders of political mobilization. Peasant leaders determined the strategy of actualizing common interest and communicated with political and legal institutions.\textsuperscript{39} After analyzing how peasant leaders strategized and defended communal interest, I argue that rational calculation and moral obligation drove individuals to join the collective action of rescuing peasant leaders.


\textsuperscript{38} Olson argues that the increase of group size reduces its chance of providing an optimal amount of a collective good. As the group enlarges, the organizational cost becomes higher, and the fraction of total benefit for any individual becomes lower and closer to the cost of participating in the group. Traffic jam is one of the examples of zero-sum collective good. Marwell and Oliver makes this insightful critique in their work. See Gerald Marwell and Pamela Oliver, \emph{The Critical Mass in Collective Action: A Micro-Social Theory} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 41-43.  

\textsuperscript{39} Charles Tilly divides mobilization into three parts: "reducing the competing claims on resources controlled by members, developing a program which corresponds to the perceived interests of members, building up a group structure which minimizes exit and voice." I focus on the second aspect in my analysis. See Charles Tilly, \emph{From Mobilization to Revolution} (New York: Random House, 1978), 71-72.
Finally, this study examines the state-society relations during the process of educational reconstruction and studies the political practices of self-governance. While the pre-existing literature explores how the state, intellectuals and urban citizens defined and practiced citizenship, we have little insight into how rural inhabitants engaged with the conversations over citizenship.\textsuperscript{40} I conceptualize rural schools as an intermediate institution between the state and society and analyze the patterns of conflicts and collaboration between both sides.\textsuperscript{41} I also scrutinize the public debate over school funding and examine how local citizens actualized an effective legislation. Although rural inhabitants participated in local politics, the majority lacked recognition of the state's agenda and followed the local communities' interest. The Nationalist state ceded its control over school funding and management to the gentry, but it did not gain their loyalty to the party-state. The divergence of ideologies in post-war Cixi helps us understand the political struggle of building citizenship in modern China.

\textbf{Sources and Methodology}


\textsuperscript{41} This idea is inspired by Chinese historian Phillip Huang's concept "the third realm." He created this term as his critique of the direct use of "the bourgeois public sphere" in Chinese studies and argued that the state-society relation before 1949 was a symbiosis rather than an opposition dichotomy. The Qing justice system, for instance, was a trinary system that consisted of the formal legal system, the informal legal system with practices of community mediation, and the third realm in which the first two negotiated and compromised with each other. Huang argued that most legal settlements ended at the third realm, and attended to two considerations of law and peacemaking. The legal practices in rural societies, therefore, were the mixture of state’s legal codes and local customs. See Phillip Huang, \textit{Civil Justice in China: Representation and Practice in the Qing} (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), Chapter 5; Phillip Huang, ""Public Sphere"/"Civil Society" in China?: The Third Realm between State and Society," \textit{Modern China} 19, no.2 (1993): 216-240.
An important reason that I chose Cixi as the locality for this study was its rich archival collection relating to rural governance. Preserved at Cixi Bureau of Archive, the "old regime" archives covered the county government documents from 1945 to 1949. The Office of Secretary and the Bureau of Finance archived most documents that I used for analyzing political organizations and peasant behavior. These documents included investigation reports of tax evasion and corruption, police interrogation notes, court archives, paperwork between the county government and town offices, peasants' complaints against officials, and town offices' budgets and tax records. They provide us with insights into, for example, the logistics of tax collection and dispute resolution and the efficiency of tax enforcement. To understand the socioeconomic conditions of the rural society, I collected agrarian production surveys from the Bureau of Infrastructural Construction and the data of prices, land taxes, and rents from provincial economic journals, local newspapers, and the Communist land surveys. These statistical materials illustrate the economic incentives of tax evasion and the public debate over taxation.

Another major category of archival materials illuminates the post-war educational reconstruction. The Bureau of Education preserved reports for every individual school that recorded student numbers, family background, members of the school board, school budget, and political activities. Student numbers and family background reflected the distribution of educational and economic resources in Cixi. To analyze how the state and society co-managed schools, I combined school reports with the lists of town representatives and officials found in the Bureau of Civil Affairs. To understand the historical experience of schooling, I used journals written
by Cixi Middle School alumni who vividly described their schools and communities in the 1940s. I also collected local educational journals and newspapers and the personal memoirs compiled by the Cicheng government to study power conflicts and policy disagreements.  

Through regional comparisons, I evaluate whether the patterns of institutional development in Cixi was unique or representative of the post-war Jiangnan rural development. Chinese historians have conducted research on several Jiangnan localities and studied the post-war development of legal, political, and educational institutions. Zhejiang newspapers also discussed institutional development at the provincial level and reported governance issues in different localities. These primary and secondary sources help me find the commonality and differences between Cixi and other regions and place a local development in a broader context of state building.

This thesis consists of three chapters. Chapter 1 looks at how the state planned its project of rural reconstruction. It first examines how the county government rebuilt political organizations based on the central state's guidelines and the socioeconomic conditions of rural communities after the Japanese occupation. It then studies how the state created a collaborative space with the society and mobilized the masses to donate and manage rural schools' economic resources. I suggest that readers who are unfamiliar with the rural institutions in modern China begin with this chapter before jumping into chapter two or three. Chapter 2 scrutinizes the fiscal crisis between the year 1945 and 1946 and explains the causes of peasant tax evasion and social

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42 Cicheng was the capital of Cixi during the Republican period.
conflicts between local officials and villagers. I use legal documents and analyze how the county government created a system to check unlawful acts. I also examine how and why peasants evaded taxes and joined the collective action to defend their interest against local officials. Chapter 3 studies the development of rural education from a massive school fundraising campaign in late 1945 to a public debate over the policy of education funding in late 1946. I study how the gentry participated in communal affairs and conflicted with the local state. Moreover, I highlight the differences between the practices of citizenship in the rural society and the state's vision of modern citizens. The conclusion gives an overarching argument and compares the Nationalist regime with the Chinese Communist Party.
Chapter 1
The Political Economy of Rural Reconstruction Planning

How did China survive the Japanese invasion? After the beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese War, the Nationalist regime lost substantial territory and moved its capital to Chongqing in Sichuan province. It struggled with controlling rural societies and mobilizing resources for warfare and found it increasingly difficult to confront the Japanese empire in the battlefield. In response to political and economic crises, the state created the "new county system" in 1939. By further expanding political organizations and extending reaches into villages, this political reform aimed to strengthen the state's capacity of engineering local societies. On the other hand, it created mechanisms for the masses to participate in local politics and express their interests in the policy formulation process. The state no longer sought domination of society as it did during the Nanjing Decade, and it provided a collaborative space for the masses and officials to negotiate and actualize common goals. The "new county system", therefore, was a turning point of the state-society relations under the Nationalist regime.

This case study focuses on Cixi, a rural county in Zhejiang province, and provides us with a lens through which to observe how rural politics shifted from the Japanese occupation to the "new county system" in the 1940s. The Nationalist governors implemented the “new county government” in 1940 and deserted the

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43 Xiao, Minguo Shiqi De Baojia Yu Xiangcun Shehui Zhili, 28.
county a year later due to the Japanese invasion. The new regime seized power for four years and failed to address five major governance issues: political fragmentation, economic depression, rampant corruption, peasant tax evasion, and a weak control over land. These conditions forced the Nationalist government to rebuild institutions in an expedient, cost-saving and decentralized manner in 1945. It established town offices (xiang gongsuo) as the local political centers. Peasants elected officials, formulated tax policies, and helped the county government monitor local officials' behavior. Officials, on the other hand, received low compensations, had inadequate training, and lacked specialized skills.

The county government also spent massive resources on developing rural schools because they served as auxiliary political institutions at the village level. As the government lacked sufficient wealth to finance schools, it took a bottom-up approach and sought support from local communities. It not only ceded the control of school funding to rural inhabitants, but also initiated a massive publicity campaign that mobilized the masses to donate their land to schools. The planning of rural reconstruction in Cixi sheds light on the impact of the Japanese occupation on the trajectory of institutional development during the post-war period. The planning also demonstrated that peasants were not passive subjects of the Nationalist regime's policies but active agents involved with local politics.

The "New County System"

The Nationalist vision of self-governance stressed self-discipline and active participation of all citizens in communal affairs. In a county, the political hierarchy

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44 CXJYZ, 47.
consisted of five levels: county, ward (qu), towns, bao, and jia. Every town had one town office as the local executive institution and one committee of town representatives as the legislative institution. Town officials received orders from the county government and were in charge of bao leaders who executed policies in villages. Town inhabitants elected bao leaders and town representatives, and representatives elected one town leader and one associate leader who led the town office. Leaders and representatives did not have the term limit, but they had to get reelected every two years to keep their positions. The qualification for election was based on a general background such as education and public service experience rather than specialized skills.

In addition to possessing the right of electing officials, the masses had supervisory power over local power holders. Under the "new county system", town representatives were able to remove town leaders from their offices after reaching a consensus, and the masses were allowed to depose representatives and bao leaders by election. The state also formulated the laws of administrative litigation that gave the legal right of prosecuting officials by the citizen and created a straightforward procedure for prosecution. As the political reform strengthened the bottom-up supervision over local organizations, county governments no longer monopolized the

46 According to the national laws, every jia consisted of six to fifteen households; every bao consisted of six to fifteen jia; every town consisted of six to fifteen bao; and fifteen to thirty towns formed a ward. See Xu Xiuli 徐秀丽, ed., Zhongguo Jindai Xiangcun Zizhi Fagui Xuanbian 中国近代乡村自治法规选编 [The Edited Volume of the Laws of Rural Self-Governance in Modern China] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2004), 218, 220. Every bao had between three and four villages. See “Cixi Renkou Tongji,” 8; CXXZ, 17.
48 Ibid., 233, 238.
power of deposing officials as they did during the Nanjing Decade. The personnel recruitment and rotation process became self-managed by rural villages.

On the other hand, the state intended to maximize the effectiveness of policy execution at the local level by creating a division of labor within town offices. During the Nanjing Decade, every ward had a ward office that was in charge of a wide variety of policies from tax collection to educational development. Every office had one leader and several assistants, and each individual had to manage and direct the execution of every single policy. The "new county system" abolished ward offices and transferred their power to lower-level organizations. The political reform also divided town offices into four separate departments: civil affairs, culture, economy, and police. Town leader, associate town leader, school teacher, and self-defense team leader led each department and hire clerks (gan shi) and logistician (shiwu yuan) if resources were available. With clearer labor specialization, town offices improved their efficiency as officials reduced the amount of wasted time on moving between different tasks and became proficient in executing one specific area of policy.

Moreover, the state provided town officials and bao leaders with a comprehensive self-governance training before they started their positions. The training materials included a broad range of governance issues such as education and hygiene, and most instructions were general guidelines rather than technical details. The fiscal training, for example, introduced different components of local finance to officials but left formalized rules of tax collection and accounting in the blank. The

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50 Xu, Zhongguo Jindai Xiangcun Zizhi Fagui Xuanbian, 95.
51 Duara, Culture, Power, and the State, 61-62.
52 Xu, Zhongguo Jindai Xiangcun Zizhi Fagui Xuanbian, 215-222.
training material informed officials about five major sources of incomes and different types of taxation and public properties. The material also outlined sixteen subjects of government spending and outlined some principles such as spending fifty percent of resources on education. Officials, however, received zero training on accounting and the logistics of tax enforcement or budget approval. The material also ignored the standardized formats of accounting books and government budgets. The state, therefore, instructed officials to extract economic resources from rural societies and assumed that they would gain accounting and logistical skills after tax collection began.53

Under the "new county system", self-government was a semi-bureaucracy with four major characteristics: a hierarchical structure with decentralized supervision; personnel recruitment and rotation based on local elections; comprehensive training that neglected formalized rules and regulations over technical issues of governance; and small-scale division of labor. This organization represented the Nationalist vision of civic republicanism and reflected the political and economic conditions during the Second Sino-Japanese War. Contending with the Japanese empire, the Nationalist state sought a swift expansion of resource base in rural societies. It had to lower the qualification for officials and expedited their training so that local governments would quickly begin functioning. The decentralization of supervisory power was also a cost-saving approach to monitor local officials. Although every county government

hired supervisors (zhidao yuan) who specialized in civil affairs, finance, construction, education, or military and guided the local governance, the number of these central agents was insufficient to manage every town office. The masses created a shortcut for a county government to control its organizations under a severe resource constraint. The town office, therefore, was an intermediate institution between the state and society, and it created a space for both sides to express their interests and to accomplish common goals.

In western Europe and Japan, the expansion of tax revenues was both a product of rapid economic development and a consequence of the emergence of Weberian rational bureaucracy at both state and local levels. Weber defined rational bureaucracy with three characteristics: a specialized process of personnel recruitment, training and task distribution; a hierarchical structure with central supervision; and formalized rules and regulations that engineer organizational members' actions toward actualizing bureaucracy's over-arching goals. The revolution of fiscal administration strengthened the state's capacity of extracting resources from local societies. The Chinese Nationalist state diverged from foreign nations where warfare gave birth to modern bureaucracy and chose to develop self-government as an alternative path toward state building.

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54 Xu, Zhongguo Jindai Xiangcun Zizhi Fagui Xuanbian, 218.
Cixi under the Japanese Occupation

On April 22, 1941, the Japanese army ended the development of the "new county system" in Cixi and occupied the capital Cicheng. With the assistance of several opportunists, the army formed a collaborationist government with a committee of public security.\(^{59}\) Lin Yuebing, the owner of a local hotel and restaurant, founded the police station and became the first head of police.\(^{60}\) The new government had limited military resources and struggled with establishing political dominance over the rural society. It governed Cicheng and its nearby villages, but it had a loose control over most other villages. Both the Nationalist Party and the Chinese Communist Party capitalized on the political vacuum by building rural schools and organizing clandestine resistance activities. While the Nationalists withdrew their force within one year, the communists reigned over the Northern part of the county for four years.\(^{61}\) The CCP propagated its political ideology, mobilized peasants to join the guerrilla groups, and contended with the collaborationist regime over territorial control.\(^{62}\) The third major power was the mountain bandit. Bandits ruled the villages in mountainous areas, robbed peasants of their grains, and fought with communists and the collaborationist government.\(^{63}\) The degree of political fragmentation and

\(^{59}\) CXXZ, 18, 692

\(^{60}\) Zhao Sui 昭綏, "Hanjina De Sumiao" 漢奸的素描 [The Drawing of National Traitors], Ningbo Ribao, March 14, 1946, 3.


\(^{62}\) CXXZ, 642-647

\(^{63}\) "Baiguan Baoandui Yufei Jizhan" 百官保安隊與匪激戰 [An Intense Fight between Bandits and A Hundred Defense Officials], Shishi Gongbao, October 20, 1943, 4.
power rotation was extremely high at this point, and many tax collectors lived in the same village but worked for distinct parties.64

The economic and political conditions led to the rise of predatory powers and a defensive peasantry. The Nationalist regime kept printing money to finance its army after the beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese War, and the price level increased more than 2,000 times from 1937 to 1945.65 Frequent military conflicts at the local level also exerted great pressure on different powers to financially support their infantry and weapons. Peasants, as a result, became the victim of tax collection from three major powers. To hedge against exploitation, peasants selected tax evasion as their survival strategy by hiding their grains and concealing themselves on mountains before tax collectors came to their villages. Tax collectors only saw children and old women in peasants' houses and left villages. Peasants returned to their houses during the nighttime and ran away again on the second morning.66 Undertaking the risk of retaliation, peasants extended their tax payment deadlines and gambled that one local power would experience a military failure and leave their villages.

In addition to the widespread tax evasion among peasants, the collaborationist regime suffered from fiscal losses caused by incomplete information of land and weak supervisory power. Governors knew little about the area and owners of land because the Nationalist government left with most of their cadastral surveys before the occupation of Cicheng.67 Without adequate resources to reconduct a cadastral

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65 Pepper, Civil War in China, 95.
66 CBA, Jiu 1-009-031, 116-119.
67 CBA, Jiu 1-002-045, 19.
survey, the government asked peasants and landlords to report their land to officials. Most numbers were inaccurate since many local bullies illegally possessed properties after their owners left Cixi. Another major issue was ineffective tax enforcement. Many local officials embezzled taxes or levied excessive taxes on peasants and used that money for gambling and alcohol consumption. Rent-seeking was ubiquitous across different rural societies under the Japanese occupation. The loss of fiscal revenues further aggravated the peasants' tax burden and led to the decline of public projects such as education.

Unbridled economic exploitation also resulted in high levels of debts between local officials and peasants in rural communities. Officials asked for certain peasants to volunteer and prepay taxes for other community members who experienced economic difficulty, and agreed to repay grains with interests after the next tax collection. In addition, the Japanese army and bandits plundered the grains stocked by officials and forced them to levy new taxes during the next harvest season for balancing the budget. In Changshiqiao and Shushan towns, for example, the expenditure on repaying previous debts and compensating economic losses in late 1945 was respectively 39.1 percent and 56.2 percent of the total spending. Rampant economic exploitation led to high taxation rates during the post-war period.

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68 Lai Yunzhang 赖云章, "Cixixian Lunxian Shiqi Chouji Xuexiao Jijin Gongzuo Gaikuang" 慈谿淪陷期間籌集學校基金工作概況 [The Summary of School Funding Projects during the Japanese Occupation Period], Chongguang Jiaoyu Yuekan 2 (1946): 20. This journal is cited hereafter as CGJYYK.
70 Brook, Collaboration, Chapter 7; Duara, Culture, Power, and the State, Chapter 8.
71 CXZ, 524-525.
72 CBA, Jiu 1-009-031, 116-119.
73 CBA, Jiu 1-006-019, 51-54.
74 CBA, Jiu 1-002-068, 229-234; Jiu1-009-036, 142-144.
Overall, the Second Sino-Japanese War had a devastating impact on the local economy and population. Cotton production declined sharply from 2,764 tons in 1940 to 1,597 tons in 1945. The core cotton-producing region in Zhejiang, including Cixi, lost 87 percent of total production, which led to the widespread shortage of clothing among 175,000 refugees. In addition, local power plants and traditional Chinese banks (qianzhuang) were closed, and trade substantially declined as the Japanese destroyed local transportation. Since many local businesses relied on trade to Ningbo and Shanghai, a great number of merchants and craftsmen became unemployed and suffered from a deteriorating living standard. Warfare also resulted in a mass displacement of population. At the provincial level, the average number of refugees in a county was 22,855 and the average loss of population was around 20,431. In Cixi, the total population dropped 45,805 and 25,700 individuals became refugees.

On September 21, 1945, the Nationalist army entered Cicheng and reasserted its control over the county. The new regime faced a broken economy and possessed limited knowledge about the changes in agrarian production and land ownership. Peasants lived in poverty and refugees waited for the government to alleviate their suffering. Rural schools either closed or struggled with finding financial resources.

75 CXXZ, 247-248.
While the communists withdrew their force after September, mountain bandits still harassed peasants and robbed their resources. To overcome these difficulties, the new government put its first priority on fiscal reconstruction.79

The Post-War Fiscal System

The installation of the "new county system" in Cixi was very efficient in the first month of governance. The county government organized local elections based on the state's laws and established forty town offices.80 Most offices had one town leader, three clerks, one logistician, and one self-defense team leader, and there were 240 town-level officials in total.81 Around 876 bao leaders and associate bao leaders assisted town officials and most of the leaders had held the same positions before the elections. These leaders were around thirty to sixty years old and the majority studied at a primary school or a traditional Chinese school.82

The government did not follow the instructions of training materials but directly adopted the Japanese tax practices and combined them into a system named “public fund” (gong gu).83 The total charge of the public fund was 14 jin of grains per mu for every landlord and tenant based on the area of land that he rented or owned. It included seven types of taxes: 1943 and 1944 public grains (gong liang), 1944 response grains (yingbian gu), 1944 and 1945 cultural grains (wenhua xiangu), 1944 administration assistance grains (xingzheng buzhu gu), and 1944 self-defense grains.

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79 CXAZ, 20.
80 CBA, Jiù 1-005-045, 159; Ibid., 13.
81 CBA, Jiù 1-009-033.
82 CBA, Jiù 1-005-015, 6; Jiù 1-005-025, 2-4; “Cixi Renkou Tongji,” 8.
83 CBA, Jiù 1-009-031, 131.
(ziwei jingfei gu).\textsuperscript{84} As people were familiar with the Japanese system, the government anticipated that a direct adoption would expedite tax collection. The government also standardized budget writing such as accounting regular incomes (jingchang men) and temporary incomes (linshi men), but it did not regulate tax paperwork.\textsuperscript{85} By late October 1945, most town offices had already begun collecting taxes.

Town officials were poorly compensated and hardly promoted. While they gained their positions through local elections, county-level bureaucrats entered the office after they passed a civil service examination. These two recruitment systems were completely different, and there was no personnel promotion and demotion between them.\textsuperscript{86} A town leader had the highest salary in his office and received 100 fabi salaries and 30,475 fabi stipends per month.\textsuperscript{87} He was able to use his income to purchase 2.26 dan of medium-grain rice in the market in February 1946, but this number dropped to 0.58 dan in October 1946 as price levels almost quadrupled within eight months.\textsuperscript{88} Assuming that a town leader’s family had five members and his household needed to consume 11.63 dan of rice every year, it became progressively difficult for him to maintain his family at the basic consumption level as inflation continued climbing.\textsuperscript{89} Although these officials enjoyed the benefits of exemption

\textsuperscript{84} CBA, Jiu 1-006-019, 51-54. Public grains were collected for financing the military; administration assistance grains were used for financially supporting town offices, and self-defense grains were collected for establishing self-defense teams in villages. The function of response grains was unknown. \textsuperscript{85} Regular incomes were usually taxation incomes, while temporary incomes were short-term fees levied for unanticipated conditions such as bandit robbery. \textsuperscript{86} Xu, Zhongguo Jindai Xiangcun Zizhi Fagui Xuanbian, 216. \textsuperscript{87} CBA, Jiu 1-009-033. Fabi was the currency unit at that time. \textsuperscript{88} “Hangshi Biao” [The Table of Market Prices], Shishi Gongbao, Feb 12, 1946, 6; October 9, 1946, 6. \textsuperscript{89} My assumption that “a town leader’s family had five members” was based on the 1946 census, which calculated that there were 61,280 households and 260,345 people in Cixi. As 61,280/260,345=4.25, 1
from military conscription and free tuition and medical treatment for their families, most of them only worked for several months and left.90

The economic predicament of town-level officials was a consequence of the Second Sino-Japanese War and post-war economic policies. The Nationalist Party remitted the land tax among 24 provinces pre-occupied by the Japanese in 1945 to alleviate peasant suffering.91 From 1938 to 1941, land tax counted as 17.27 percent to 40.17 percent of total incomes of Zhejiang county governments. At the provincial level, land tax counted as 30 to 40 percent of total income of the provincial government in the pre-war period, and the number dropped to 20 percent during the war period.92 These numbers demonstrated that the county government lost a great proportion of its income due to the new tax policy. Besides, economic destruction and population displacement forced the county government to spend 65 percent of its resources on refugee reliefs and subsidies. With only 18 percent of total spending on rebuilding the bureaucracy, the government lacked the financial capacity to fully support its organizations.93

Political fragmentation under the Japanese occupation also forced the county government to practice fiscal decentralization. The government transferred the duties of collecting and accounting taxes to town offices and gave the autonomy in levying

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91 Eastman, Seeds of Destruction, 73.
additional taxes to committees of town representatives. A local fiscal policy must gain approval from the masses before its execution. The flexibility of the fiscal system was an adaptive solution to the difficulty of determining a uniform tax rate on towns with different levels of economic exploitation. The collaborationist regime, the CCP, and mountain bandits had distinct tax policies, and peasants and tax collectors borrowed money from each other to fulfill their fiscal "obligations". It was most efficient, therefore, to set a low uniform tax rate and to let local communities determine their actual fiscal demands. In Yunhu town, for instance, the town leader held four meetings with town representatives, peasants and the gentry before reaching a consensus. The town office collected military grains (jun liang) six jin per mu for financing the Nationalist Army’s temporary stay at the town and levied additional ten jin per mu administration assistance grains. It also charged eight jin per mu grains for paying off debts and compensating economic losses during the occupation and early liberation periods. The local tax rate was 26 jin of grains per mu, around two times higher than the uniform public fund.94

Moreover, the county government took advantage of the masses' hatred toward collaborationists and galvanized them into supervising local officials through the movement of purging national traitors (hanjian). In December 1945, the central government formalized the laws of punishing national traitors and defined any bureaucrat who worked for the collaborationist regime in a formal organization as a national traitor.95 The Zhejiang provincial government encouraged the masses to

94 CBA, Jiu 1-006-019, 51-54.
95 “Chengzhi Hanjian Tiaoli (Minguo 34 Nian)” 懲治漢奸條例 (民國 34 年) [The Laws of Punishing National Traitors (Year 1945)], Wikisource, last modified July 9, 2017,
report national traitors who concealed themselves after the war and rewarded those
who provided the government with the names and property information of traitors.
Most individuals anonymously reported (jian ju) national traitors, listed their crimes
to local governments and governors, and demanded harsh punishments. From 1945 to
1947, the Zhejiang provincial justice department received 9,537 cases and prosecuted
5,416 of them.⁹⁶ In Cixi, the masses not only formed an anti-traitor committee that
checked local officials' backgrounds, but also collectively prosecuted several
notorious collaborationists who worked for the military and exploited peasants during
the war.⁹⁷ The movement of purging national traitors also encouraged the masses to
seek legal assistance when they experienced exploitation from town officials and bao
leaders, and they often compared these powerholders with national traitors and asked
for harsh punishments.⁹⁸

The fiscal system in post-war Cixi was the product of both the "new county
system" and the legacy of Japanese occupation. The county government followed
most of the guidelines formulated by the central government in 1939 and made some
modest changes. The economic failure of the collaborationist regime caused the
financial predicament of town officials, and political fragmentation led to the practice
of fiscal decentralization. The masses gained an unprecedented autonomy in shaping

https://zh.wikisource.org/wiki/%E6%87%B2%E6%B2%BB%E6%BC%A2%E5%A5%B8%E6%A2%9D%E4%BE%8B_%E6%B0%91%E5%9C%8B34%E5%B9%B4).  
⁹⁷ "Ci Qingchu Hanjian Weiyuan Shengcha Xiang Baozhang Mingdan"慈清除漢奸委員審查鄉保長名單[The Cixi Committee of Purging National Traitors Checked the Backgrounds of Bao Leaders], *Ningbo Ribao*, December 2, 1946, 5; "Zhupi Yuan Asan Zuixing"著痞袁阿三罪行[Crimes of Notorious Bully Yuan A'san], *Cixi Bao*, July 13, 1946, 2.
⁹⁸ CBA, Jiu 1-009-031.
local policies and became the county government's powerful ally to monitor its local agents. We can see a similar bottom-up approach in the post-war project of educational development.

**The Politics of Rural Education**

In addition to rebuilding the local fiscal regime, the Cixi county government put educational reconstruction on top of its agenda because schools were a part of the "new county system" and they carried significant political, economic and military tasks. Based on the new educational laws in October 1945, every town had to have at least one central national school (zhongxin guomin xuexiao), and every three bao had to have at least one national school. Central national schools had the most abundant educational resources in a town and oversaw local national schools.99 Most town and bao leaders managed local schools' funding and some of them were even school principals. Most principals had joined the Nationalist Party, served as the assistants of town and bao leaders, and helped them complete the schools' political tasks.

According to many Cixi national schools’ reports, schools aided the county government to conduct a census, asked students to explain policies to their parents, and organized political lectures for peasants.100

Rural schools created a channel for the county government to mobilize the masses and gain their popular support for its economic reconstruction plan. In January 1947, the government began a campaign of "moving tombs from plains to mountains and planting trees on tombs" (fen shangshan, shushang fen) that aimed to

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100 CBA, Jiu 1-008-002, Jiu 1-008-003, Jiu 1-008-004.
create more land for rural production and to alleviate the environmental crisis of wood shortage. School teachers created children’s songs for the campaign and asked children to sing before their parents. They also organized lectures about the economic benefits of moving tombs and the fallacies of superstitious beliefs like *feng shui* to peasants. The campaign was successful in the first year, as few peasants resisted the government's policy and most of them began burying dead bodies on mountains. In this case, schools were publicity centers that bridged political conversations between the local state and rural communities.

Moreover, the Nationalist state aimed to facilitate civic engagement and rebuild national defense through rural education. On the one hand, adults received political lectures and studied laws and policies. Children followed the local political procedures of election and formed their bodies that regulated behavior and organized extracurricular activities. The state believed that this learning process helped familiarize individuals with the local governance and encouraged them to participate in communal affairs. Rural schools were the incubator for the Nationalist regime to actualize a civic republican model of democratic politics in rural societies. On the other hand, the Nationalist state added physical education and military training to the school curriculum and designed rural schools into the core of military reconstruction. Political elites believed that village-level military training was essential for national  

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101 *Feng Shui* is a Taoist system that seeks to establish a harmonious relationship between individuals and their surrounding environment. People generally apply this idea to select ideal residential and burial places.


103 Culp, *Articulating Citizenship*, 114-120.
defense as it cultivated young soldiers and helped villagers prepare for the outbreak of a war.\textsuperscript{104} The school’s military function also assisted the state to conscript and rebuild its armies after devastating losses during the war. The political struggle with the Chinese Communist Party created a pressing demand for military reconstruction.

As rural schools became an indispensable part of post-war reconstruction, the Cixi county government was eager to overcome two major difficulties and to expand its educational system. There were 106 primary schools with approximately 8,000 students by the end of the war, and the government still needed to build around eighty schools according to the standard of national laws.\textsuperscript{105} One important issue was the chaotic ownership of school properties. As the illegitimate possession of land was widespread between 1941 and 1945, 12,363 land controversies occurred among seven out of twenty-five towns in 1946.\textsuperscript{106} In many towns, villagers wanted to rebuild a rural school and sued individuals who possessed school-owned land and were unwilling to give it back to villagers.\textsuperscript{107} According to the national law, the state had an exclusive right to possess and to use school-owned land.\textsuperscript{108}

The lack of financial resources was another barrier to educational development. Since the county government had to invest most of its resources in the bureaucracy and refugee relief, it only spent 4.5 percent of its budget on education.\textsuperscript{109} Warfare also made many local gentry lose the capacity of financing public schools and

\textsuperscript{104} Li Zonghuang 李宗黃, "Xianxing Baojia Zhidu" 現行保甲制度 [Today's Baojia System], in Minguo Shiliao Congkan, 299-312.
\textsuperscript{105} CXJYZ, 47.
\textsuperscript{106} CBA, Jiu 1-002-045, 19-20.
\textsuperscript{107} "Fuhai Yibao Choufu Baoxiao" 附海一保籌復保校 [The First Bao of Fuhai Town Attempted to Resume Local National School], Cixi Bao, Aug 9, 1946, 3.
\textsuperscript{108} The Training Committee of Chinese Nationalist Party's Central Execution Committee, "Bao Zizhi Renyuan Xunlian Jiaocai," 541, 545.
establishing private schools. In addition, rural schools used to rely on local merchants' economic support, but most merchants were no longer able to donate to school funding after 1945.\textsuperscript{110} The Second Sino-Japanese War caused high inflation and unemployment rates at Shanghai and hit Cixi merchants' local businesses. The price level kept climbing up and almost quadrupled in 1946.\textsuperscript{111} Prices reduced consumers’ purchasing power and demand and escalated production and labor costs for businesses. A large number of industries and companies could not compete with lower-priced foreign products in the domestic market and went bankrupt. 1,716 cases of strikes and labor controversies occurred in Shanghai in 1946, but there were only 278 cases at the national level in 1936. Cixi merchants were involved with Shanghai finance, pharmacies, and cotton production industries, but these sectors had the highest unemployment rates after 1945.\textsuperscript{112} Even Qin Runqing, one of the leaders of Shanghai finance who built two primary schools and financed the local middle school in Cixi, had to use his own pensions to rebuild these schools after the war was over.\textsuperscript{113} Accordingly, most Cixi national school principals experienced difficulty in seeking school funding from their communal members in Shanghai.\textsuperscript{114}

The county government intended to achieve educational reconstruction by mobilizing the masses to participate in the school management. Political mobilization

\textsuperscript{110} Hu Ling 護鐸, "Benxian Jiaoyu Jingfei De Weiji" 本縣教育經費的危機 [The Crisis of School Funding at This County], \textit{CGIJYYK} 2 (1946): 23-24.
\textsuperscript{111} "Hangshi Biao," Feb 12, 1946, 6; December 31, 1946, 6.
\textsuperscript{114} CBA, Jiu 1-008-002, Jiu 1-008-003, Jiu 1-008-004.
was the only viable option because the government relied on the initiative of rural communities to resume its ownership of school properties, and the national laws forbade it from increasing school tuition or taxing land for financing schools. The government required each national school to establish one committee of fund custodians (jijin baoguan weiyuanhui) and gave the autonomy in managing school funding to these committees. Each committee consisted of local bao or town leaders, one faculty member, and five to seven individuals elected from local communities. The county government also asked wealthy merchants to join these committees, as they had abundant economic resources and fund-management expertise. Every member of the committee voted one individual as its chief, and in most committees the chief was an inhabitant of the local society who was not involved with any governmental body. School reports also showed that 133 out of 193 national schools formed their committees of fund custodians by 1947, and over half of these committees were mainly or exclusively controlled by a single local clan. This high percentage suggested that rural communities dominated the control over schools'
economic resources and traditional clan-based schools revived during the post-war period.\textsuperscript{119}

Although a committee of fund custodians was able to autonomously control school funding most of the time, the county government intervened when schools failed to cope with financial crisis. In May 1946, four schools were on the verge of shutting down and could no longer pay salaries to teachers. They asked the county government for financial aid, and the government sent several supervisors to different schools. These supervisors mediated fights between committee members and teachers and worked with town officials on collecting educational taxes and redistributing local resources to schools.\textsuperscript{120} In August, the county government formed the Committee of Culture and Education Progress (\textit{wenhua jiaoyu xiejin weiyuanhui}) that was in charge of raising and distributing educational resources in every town. These committees strengthened the economic symbiosis between the local state and rural schools and facilitated the negotiations of resource allocation.\textsuperscript{121} Rural schools, therefore, created another intermediate space between the local state and society in which both sides collaborated on school funding and political tasks.

Apart from building semi-public and semi-private rural schools, the county government initiated a major fundraising movement named "raising fifty-thousand \textit{mu} of school-owned land" in December 1945. It aimed to raise school-owned land to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{119} For rural education in traditional China, see Angela Ki Che Leung, "Elementary Education in the Lower Yangtze Region in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in \textit{Education and Society in Late Imperial China, 1600-1900}, ed. Benjamin A. Elman and Alexander Woodside (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).
\item \textsuperscript{120} "Jiaoyu Dashijian: Wuyue Yiri Zhi Wuyue Sayiri" 教育大事件: 五月一日至五月卅一日 [Important Events of Education: from May 1 to May 31], \textit{CGJYYK} 3-4 (1946): 46.
\item \textsuperscript{121} "Cixi Xian Wenhua Jiaoyu Xiejin Weiyuanhui Zuzhi Zhangcheng" 慈溪縣文化教育協進委員會組織章程 [The Rules and Organization of the Committee of Culture and Education Progress], \textit{Cixi Bao}, Nov 23, 1946, 4.
\end{itemize}
finance 140 primary schools and set teacher’s monthly salary at 370 jin of grains.\textsuperscript{122}

The school-owned land (\textit{xue tian}) system began during the Northern Song dynasty (960-1127), when the Chinese state financed schools by providing them with certain land. Schools rented land to peasants and used land rents as their financial income.\textsuperscript{123}

During the early Qing period, school-owned land expanded and reached 1,505,403 \textit{mu} at the national level in 1753.\textsuperscript{124} Purchased or donated from the merchant and gentry, the school-owned land was one of the most important sources of income for rural schools until the Chinese state tremendously increased its spending on local education during the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{125} In 1929, school-owned land only accounted for 15 percent of schools’ income in Zhejiang, while government spending

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{122} The county government’s calculation of fifty-thousand acres of land was based the following logic: for the lower primary education, in every class year, the total cost per month was 410 jin of grains, which included one teacher’s salary and the monthly cost on school’s facility. The annual cost, therefore, would be 4920 jin. Additional 4200 jin would be used for masses’ education, and therefore the total spending of a rural school’s lower primary education per year was 6,720 jin of grain. Every \textit{mu} of land’s rent was between 60 and 70 jin of grain, and therefore one school’s lower primary education sector needed a hundred \textit{mu} of land per class year. The county government assumed that there would be 100 such schools, and each school had 4 class years. Therefore, the local lower primary education needed 40,000 \textit{mu} of land. Likewise, for the higher primary education, it had two class years, and each cost 120 \textit{mu} of land. There would be 40 schools that provided students with this education, and therefore the total demand of land was 10,000 \textit{mu} of land. See “Wanzhong Yixin Wancheng Xuetian Yundong,” 1-3.

The Nationalist Party adopted the \textit{renxu} educational system, which divided primary education into four-year lower primary education and two-year higher primary education. Lower Primary Schools only provided schools with lower primary education, while complete primary schools offered higher primary education to schools in addition to lower one. See Tian Zhengping and Xiao Lang, \textit{Shiji Zhi Lixiang: Zhongguo Jindai Yiwu Jiaoyu Yanjiu} [A Dream of the Century: A Study of Compulsory Education in Modern China] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Education Press, 2000), 216-219.


\textsuperscript{124} Qian Rong, “Qingdai Xuetian Laiyuan Shixi” [An Analysis of Sources of School-Owned Land during the Qing Dynasty], \textit{The Qing History Journal} 4 (1998): 64-72.

\end{footnotesize}
constituted 57 percent.\textsuperscript{126} The return to tradition means of financing schools reflected the county government’s limited economic resources for public projects during the post-war period.

The government solicited temples and public land from rural communities and asked rich businessmen and landlords to donate their assets. Descent groups owned public land and used it for fundraising religious activities, celebrating traditional festivals, and helping impoverished clan members.\textsuperscript{127} For instance, the Feng clan, the largest clan at Cicheng, held Siwen ritual twice a year. The Feng clan began this tradition in 1862 to make clan members appreciate their ancestors’ contributions to the clan’s success. During the ritual, every clan member worshipped their ancestors, enjoyed a feast and watched Chinese theater. Every ritual cost the rents of 250 mu of land, and the Feng clan owned 1160 mu of land for financing such activities in 1937.\textsuperscript{128} The clan-owned land was the most desirable source of school incomes during the post-war period as it constituted 23 percent of the total land area in Cixi.\textsuperscript{129}

The school fundraising movement was a massive publicity campaign that aimed to mobilize the masses to donate their properties to schools. School teachers, members of committees of fund custodians and education bureaucrats were in charge of promulgating policies. They created slogans, put publicity materials on local newspapers and news walls, and sent a brochure to every household. They also held collective meetings in towns, villages, and schools that required the peasant and

\textsuperscript{127} “Cixi Xian Chouji Wuwanmu Xuetian Yundong Shishi Fangan,” 5-11
\textsuperscript{128} Feng, Qiannian Wangzu, 75-76, 149.
\textsuperscript{129} CXXZ, 212.
gentry to participate.\textsuperscript{130} Publicity staffs argued that the county government wanted to help peasants rebuild rural schools and create social welfare for themselves. The speech script wrote that

\begin{quote}
Suppose I have land and properties, should I use for repairing temples? Or for building schools? For financially supporting monks? Or for hiring teachers? Accumulating wealth for my descendants? Or leaving morality? As long as everybody is willing to donate a small proportion of family properties for important purposes, one is doing the best good deeds.\textsuperscript{131}
\end{quote}

This narrative stressed that the land for religious purposes was useless while educational spending would cost little to families. It also showed that the government did not enforce peasants to donate land but allowed them to make independent decisions.

At the institutional level, the county government created fundraising organizations that both its agents and members of local communities participated in. In every town, there was one school fundraising initiatives group that consisted of town and \textit{bao} leaders, school principals, and seven to eleven people coming from the local community who had a strong commitment to rural education. Under the guidance of education supervisors assigned by the county government, this group determined the target, amount, and distribution of donation and aided committees of fund custodian to manage their economic resources.\textsuperscript{132} It also helped the county

\textsuperscript{130} "Cixixian Chouji Wuwan Mu Xuetian Xundong Xuanchuan Jihua Dagang" 慈谿縣籌集五萬畝學田運動宣傳計畫大綱 [The Outline of Publicity for Raising Fifty-Thousand Mu of School-Owned Land Movement in Cixi County], \textit{CGJYYK} 2 (1946): 11-12.


government reconduct a cadastral survey of school-owned land and redistribute properties.\textsuperscript{133} From the school-owned land management to political mobilization, the government drafted plans and let local institutions autonomously execute policies.\textsuperscript{134} Around 12,000 mu of land was under the registration, more than five times higher than that during the Japanese occupation period.\textsuperscript{135}

The local state created a collaborative space with rural communities in its educational reconstruction project and encouraged people to donate and manage schools' economic resources. As Chiang Kai-Shek pointed out in \textit{China's Destiny}, Chinese nationals must have confidence in national reconstruction and the virtues of complete loyalty to the state and filial piety to the Chinese race.\textsuperscript{136} The local state demanded these ideal virtues from people and asked them to sacrifice their cultural practices to actualize the state's vision even though worshipping gods had always played an indispensable role in their daily lives. The masses became the pioneer of rural modernization in the state's vision.

\textbf{Conclusion}

The institutional development of town offices and rural schools demonstrated that the Japanese occupation profoundly affected post-war rural reconstruction. The economic failure of the collaborationist regime led to a severe resource shortage after the end of the war and made the Nationalist government build cost-saving but fragile institutions. Although it established forty town offices and 188 national schools

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{133} "Zhengli Chongshi Bing Kuoda Chouji Xuexiao Jijin Fadong Wuwanmu Xuetian Yundong Banfa" 整理充实並擴大籌集學校基金發動五萬畝學田運動辦法 [The Method of Registering and Expanding School Funding and Raising Fifty-Thousand School-Owned Land Movement], \textit{CGJYYK} 2 (1946): 3.
  \item \textsuperscript{134} "Cixi Xian Chouji Wuwanmu Xuetian Yundong Shishi Fangan," 5.
  \item \textsuperscript{135} Lai, "Cixixian Lunxian Shiqi Chouji Xuexiao Jijin Gongzuo Gaikuang." 20.
  \item \textsuperscript{136} Chiang, \textit{China's Destiny and Chinese Economy Theory}, 165.
\end{itemize}
within six months, officials were poorly compensated and trained while most schools always faced debt crises. These issues later caused widespread tax evasion and a public debate over educational finance in 1946.

On the other hand, the Japanese occupation destroyed the Nationalist government's control over peasant society and forced it to take a bottom-up approach to raise resources. As the levels of taxes, plundering and debts varied in different towns, the local state could not capture a complete picture of fiscal demands and had to decentralize its power to rural communities. Likewise, it initiated a massive school fundraising campaign and ceded much control of schools to local communities because they possessed most educational resources and the knowledge of changes in property ownership. The local state was in a very weak position and had to create a collaborative space with society to negotiate and accomplish common goals.

While the local state relinquished some control of policy formulation and execution, rural inhabitants stood in a pivotal position in rural reconstruction. They became the supervisors of local officials, planners of fiscal policies, and initiators of school building. Individuals gained an unparalleled power in shaping public life and received an unprecedented degree of independence from their governors. The state-building project was impossible unless individuals agreed with the state's plan and devoted resources to accomplish it. The problem was: what would happen if rural inhabitants acted on their own will and refused to play their roles designed by the state?

Chapter 2

Peasants, Officials, and the County Government: The Crisis of Tax Evasion

In the afternoon of August 10, 1946, twenty police armed with guns and grenades searched for three peasants who led a collective resistance against the tax collection of 7,700 jin of grains in a small village at Luotuoqiao Town. These three peasants were wealthy tenants who rented large areas of land in the village, and they argued that town officials violated the county government’s policy and never gave receipts to peasants after they paid their taxes. The police surrounded their houses, beat them, and took them to the police station. Peasants were afraid of police revenge, but on that night they were united and determined to fight for their leaders. The police station was inundated with a hundred peasants protesting against illegal taxation and demanding the release of the detainees. The police arrested two peasants who led protests and released five detainees on August 15. Peasants then hired a lawyer at Yin County, prosecuted the police and town officials, and sent their complaints to the county government, the county court, and the sixth ward provincial government.138 A journalist also publicized their experience on Shishi Gongbao, the largest circulated newspaper in Ningbo. Titled “darkness without light,” the newspaper article sympathized with peasants and criticized exploitation. Unarmed peasants forced the police and town officials to face the county government’s investigations.139

138 In Chinese political hierarchy, the ward provincial government was above the county government but below the provincial government. Cixi was in the sixth ward district. Yin County was on the border of Cixi.
139 CBA, Jiu 1-002-067; “Ci Luotuo Zhen Wuzhuang Zhenggu, Jubu Xiangmin Xialuo Buming” 慈駱駱鎮武裝征穀，拘捕鄉民下落不明 [Cixi Luotuo Town Used Force to Collect Grains and Arrest Peasants, and Peasants’ Situations Were Unknown], Shishi Gongbao, August 12, 1946, 5.
In its rural reconstruction planning, the county government never visualized social conflicts like those in Luotuoqiao Town but anticipated that officials and peasants collaborated on raising resources and rebuilding their communities. Drawing lessons from the failure of rural governance during the Nanjing Decade, the Nationalist state granted the supervisory power over local officials to peasants and took a bottom-up approach to monitor rural organizations. The economic predicament led many officials to commit unlawful acts during the post-war period, but the masses were able to protect themselves from exploitation and help the state retrieve its

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140 Luotuoqiao Town and Changshiqiao Town were merged into Changluo Town at this point. Guomu was located in Lubu on the map, and Yangpu was located in Sanpu. CXXZ, 14.
revenue losses. In Luotuoqiao Town, the county government verified the fact that the chief of local police, Yang, used torture during the inquisition, and he resigned in September with the excuse of health issues.\textsuperscript{141}

The county government had made a fatal political miscalculation, as it ignored the possibility of peasants evading taxes. Peasants at Luotuoqiao Town concealed some land and registered a smaller area during the cadastral surveys to evade a huge amount of taxes.\textsuperscript{142} Such phenomena were ubiquitous across different towns, and rampant tax evasion led to a fiscal crisis in post-war Cixi. Among ten town offices that left complete records of their tax collection between the year 1945 and 1946, the tax gap was 2,062,225.5 jin of grains, which constituted 26.1 percent of expected tax incomes.\textsuperscript{143} The tax gap of twenty-eight towns by November 1946 was 1,366.82 dan of rice and the actual tax income was only 55.2 percent of the expected value.\textsuperscript{144}

The peasant tax evasion was the product of post-war economic and political conditions, the social structure of rural villages, and the overarching goals of the Nationalist state. While poverty and the loopholes in the fiscal system provided peasants with economic incentives to evade taxes, the level of trust of local officials was the determining factor for individuals to choose to cooperate or defect with town offices. Political mistrust often led to the dysfunction of town offices and forced the county government to intervene in local controversies. At the village level, most communities had one or several leaders who were able to mobilize peasants toward

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{141} CBA, Jiu 1-002-067; "Zhuangqiao Jingsuozhang Yang Zilian Qingci" 莊橋警所長楊子廉請辭 [The Head of Zhuangqiao Police Station Yang Zilian Resigned], \textit{Cixi Bao}, September 23, 1946, 3.
\item \textsuperscript{142} Hu Guang 華光, "Cixi De Zhenggu Jiufeng" 慈溪的征穀糾紛 [The Controversy of Grain Collection in Cixi], \textit{Ningbo Ren} 7-8 (1946): 4.
\item \textsuperscript{143} CBA, Jiu1-009-035, Jiu1-009-036.
\item \textsuperscript{144} CBA, Jiu1-009-024.
\end{itemize}
collective resistance against tax escalation and wrongdoings and determined the strategy of actualizing common interest. The tale of Luotuoqiao Town represented how wealthy tenants united peasants and prosecuted the police and officials for violence and tax abuses. The social cohesion among peasants made the government give lenient punishment to individuals who committed unlawful acts to minimize the risk of popular uprisings, but these legal decisions further motivated individuals to evade taxes.

Rural reconstruction in Cixi demonstrated that it was impossible for the state to extract sufficient resources from rural societies while maintaining social stability during the post-war period. The county government chose stability at the cost of developing ineffective legal and political institutions. The tension between peasants and local powerholders in Luotuoqiao Town, therefore, ended in peace and compromise. For most of the peasants who evaded taxes and the police who used violence, neither group received severe punishment. Both sides took a step back, chose to avoid further escalating conflicts, and terminated the case in September.\textsuperscript{145}

Peasants did not rescue the state from the crisis but led to a failure of fiscal reconstruction that accelerated the collapse of the economy and exacerbated the problems of Nationalist military for fighting against the Communist army.

**Fiscal and Legal Systems in Cixi**

Before the Nationalist state resumed land taxes in September 1946, the Cixi county government adopted Japanese tax policies and practiced fiscal decentralization.\textsuperscript{146}

\textsuperscript{145} Hu, "Cixi De Zhenggu Jiufeng," 4.

\textsuperscript{146} "Zheshengfu Faling Tianfu Zhengshi Gangyao" 浙省府發田賦徵實綱要 [The Zhejiang Provincial Government Announced the Principles of Land Taxes], *Shishi Gongbao*, August 2, 1946, 5.
From October 1945 to January 1946, the government developed a fiscal system named "public fund" that combined military, education, governance, and self-defense taxes levied during the Japanese occupation. It charged 14 jin of grains per mu for every landlord and tenant based on the area of land that he rented or owned. The county government transferred the duties of collecting taxes to town offices and gave the autonomy in levying additional taxes and electing local officials to rural communities. Since each town experienced different levels of plundering and exploitation before 1945, the government had to leave local communities to determine their fiscal demands. Decentralization caused many legal controversies about the legitimacy of local tax policies in late 1945 and forced the county government to centralize the power of policy formulation in January 1946. The new magistrate Zhang Hongbin abolished local taxes and ordered town offices to reaudit the amount of public fund that tenants and landlords owed to the county government. They paid for a new type of tax named “purchased grains” (pinggou shiliang), which accounted thirty percent of owed taxes. This policy aimed to reduce peasants’ economic burden and to finance the county government and the police system.

To prevent town officials from abusing their power, the Nationalist regime created an accessible and flexible system of administrative litigation for the masses to be involved in. The national laws stipulated in 1933 standardized a straightforward procedure of writing complaints, but it did not designate a specific institution to handle lawsuits at the county and provincial levels. There was only one

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147 CBA, Jiu 1-006-019, 51-54.
administrative court at Nanking that had ultimate appellate jurisdiction over sub-level cases. The state designed such a system to expedite the judicial process of administrative litigation at courts and created convenience for people who were unfamiliar with the new legal system.

Another legal reform under the Nationalist regime was the separation of the judicial branch from the executive branch of the government at the county level. In the traditional Chinese legal system, the local government yamen monopolized judicial power and the magistrate was the judge for resolving legal controversies. The Nationalist regime institutionalized county courts, gave them exclusive rights of handling civil and criminal lawsuits, and forbade judges and prosecutors from taking governmental positions. In Cixi, the county government established the court in 1927, but magistrates still controlled the court and were responsible for the provincial High Court. This was a step toward a complete legal reform, but the Second Sino-Japanese War interrupted the progress. The reform was theoretically complete in November 1945, since the county government no longer controlled the detention center and the Zhejiang High Court determined the appointments of prosecutors and

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150 Yang Yuqing 杨玉清, “Guanyu Jiefang Qian Guotongqu De Xingzheng Susong” [About the Administrative Litigation under the Nationalist Regime before the Liberation], Faxue Zazhi 06 (1987): 40.


152 "Fayuan Zuzhi Fa (Minguo 34 Nian)” 法院組織法 (民國 34 年) [The Organizational Laws of Court (1945)], Wikisource, last modified June 17, 2017, https://zh.wikisource.org/wiki/%E6%B3%95%E9%99%A2%E7%B5%84%E7%B9%94%E6%B3%95_%E5%AC%E5%B8%83#E7.AC.AC.E4.BA.8C.E7.AB.0E.E5.9C.B0.E6.96.B9.E6.B3.95.E9.99.A2.

judges at the Cixi county court. In theory, the county government and court shared the judicial power over administrative litigation and both institutions were not subject to each other's influence.

**The Controversies of Exploitation and Tax Evasion**

Fiscal decentralization increased the tax burden on peasants between October 1945 and January 1946. As the table 2 illustrates, local tax rates were two to three times higher than the uniform "public fund" rate. Officials justified their policies by arguing that they needed to repay debts or compensate economic losses during the Japanese occupation period. Some of them asked certain peasants to prepay taxes for other community members who experienced economic difficulty and agreed to repay grains with interests after the next tax collection. Some town offices experienced substantial loss of grains due to the plundering of Japanese, communists or bandits, and officials had to levy a higher amount of taxes to make bureaus continue functioning.

Tax escalation led to intense conflicts between town officials and peasants over the legitimacy of fiscal policies. Many peasants claimed they were the victims of exploitation and wrote complaints against town offices to the county government. They narrated how town and *bao* leaders monopolized legislative power and used violence to enforce peasants to pay for unaffordable taxes. Peasant activism led the county legislative institution Consultative Council (*canyi hui*) to put stricter restrictions on the public fund system. After reading numerous complaints from...
different towns, members of the Council were astonished at the amount of taxes and the extent of unlawful acts at the lower level. They noted that:

Many town offices violate the law, disrespect the government, exploit the masses, and abuse their power. If we do not punish these crimes, how do we gain support from our people? We must, therefore, give harsh punishment to town offices that violate the law and levy illegitimate grains.\textsuperscript{157}

They drafted a bill that forbade town offices from levying taxes in addition to the public fund, and the county government passed the bill on November 6, 1945.\textsuperscript{158}

Weak enforcement of the bill eventually resulted in an overhaul of the fiscal system led by a new magistrate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town Name</th>
<th>Tax Rate on tenants (\textit{jin} of grains per \textit{mu})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dayin</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhuangqiao</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linghan</td>
<td>40-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changshi</td>
<td>40-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yangshu</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hongtang</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hetou</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shushan</td>
<td>30-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xiaozhong</td>
<td>45-55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhangting</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yunhu</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Tax Rates in Eleven Towns between October 1945 and January 1946\textsuperscript{159}

Tax evasion became the primary cause of conflicts between town offices and peasants after the reform of the fiscal system in January 1946. Many \textit{bao} leaders collected villagers' taxes but did not pay their own taxes. They swiftly resigned after

\textsuperscript{157} CBA, Jiu 1-009-031, 57.  
\textsuperscript{158} CBA, Jiu 1-009-031, 58.  
\textsuperscript{159} CBA, Jiu 1-009-031.
the tax collection was over and town offices found out their problems during tax reauditing. In Changshiqiao Town, for example, the tax gap was 90,097 jin of grains and the amount of evaded tax per capita was 15.16 jin of grains. The evaded tax per capita among twelve bao leaders, however, was 1,125 jin of grains, around 75 times higher than the average number of the whole town. On the other hand, wealthy tenants evaded the highest amount of taxes among peasants. They rented twenty to thirty mu of land, three to four times higher than the average area of land that a tenant rented, and evaded around 500 jin of grains. The rest of peasants usually owed less than 200 jin of grains to the county government, but it was quite often that every household in a village committed tax evasion.

The economic predicament provided officials and peasants with a strong incentive to evade taxes. Most bao leaders did not receive salaries from the county government, but they had to finish a massive amount of work on local governance. Political tasks overwhelmed bao leaders and reduced their time on agrarian production. Economic pressure forced many officials to commit unlawful acts and quickly return to their land. For most peasants, high tax rates and land rents and soaring prices under hyperinflation led to their poverty during the post-war period. The average annual yield rate of land was 2.33 dan of rice in 1946 and the average area of land that a tenant rented was 7.7 mu. The county government set the land rent rate at 37.5 percent of rural production, but landlords in many towns disregarded

162 CBA, Jiu 1-002-067, 33-34; Jiu 1-002-068, 225-228.
163 CBA, Jiu 1-009-031.
164 Xiao, Minguo Shiqi De Baojia Yu Xiangcun Shehui Zhili, 242-247.
165 Ni, "Zhejiang Zhi Tianfu Zhengshi," 5.
this policy and demanded tenants to give forty to fifty percent of grains to them.\textsuperscript{166}

After paying their taxes and land rents, most peasants were only left with six \textit{dan} of rice for the whole year, almost half of the amount of rice that a household required to sustain itself at the basic food consumption level. Some even had to borrow from usurious landlords to survive at the subsistence level.\textsuperscript{167}

Many peasants attempted to evade taxes by exploiting the loopholes in the fiscal system. Since illegal possession of properties was rampant during the Japanese occupation period, the county government reconducted a cadastral survey and asked peasants to report their land to officials.\textsuperscript{168} As those in Luotuoqiao Town, many peasants concealed land and fabricated numbers. When government agents found out about their falsification, some peasants claimed that the situation after the war was so chaotic that they were unable to update the accurate numbers. Some used unresolved land controversies such as the inheritance right as an excuse to register less land.\textsuperscript{169}

Another strategy was to falsify legal evidence by creating false tax papers. In Jiangzhong Town, the town leader reported that a peasant named Fang evaded taxes and asked for the county government to send a supervisor to investigate. Fang showed seven receipts of tax payment to the supervisor, but the supervisor speculated that Fang lied about his tax payment. Although all of the receipts mentioned that a \textit{bao} leader received a certain amount of grains from Fang, they were inconsistent in three

\textsuperscript{167} Yi Hui 益輝, "Baojia Zhidu Yazha Xiade Nongmin" 保甲制度壓榨下的農民 [Peasants Suppressed by the \textit{Baojia} System], \textit{Xinqi} 8 (1946).
\textsuperscript{168} CBA, Jiu 1-002-045, 19-20.
\textsuperscript{169} CBA, Jiu 1-002-068, 235-239.
ways. Two receipts lacked a specific date and had a completely different stamp and writing style from the rest of receipts. Fang eventually failed to evade 156 jin of grains after the supervisor found out his tricks.\textsuperscript{170} The county government expedited town officials' training and left standardized rules of tax collecting and accounting in a blank. Without a consistent system, one could easily fabricate a paper with a stamp and a writing brush. Town officials had to spend large amount of time on identifying the veracity of objects, and sometimes they also forgot to write dates or put a stamp on the paper. Stamp issues were widespread during the early stage of tax collection and even forced the Consultative Council to propose a new policy of delegitimizing any paperwork without official stamps in November 1945.\textsuperscript{171}

The most determining factor that explained why peasants evaded taxes rather than cooperated with town offices was their lack of trust of local officials. Political mistrust was based on peasants' perception of local officials and the larger political environment. During the Japanese occupation period, the collaborationist regime, the Chinese Communist Party, and the mountain bandit ruled over different regions of the county and frequently contended for territory. Many peasants had to pay taxes for different parties and therefore selected tax evasion as their adaptive solution to the issues of protecting scarce resources from outside predatory powers. They hid their grains and concealed themselves on mountains before tax collectors came to their villages. Undertaking the risk of retaliation, peasants extended their tax payment deadlines and gambled that one local power would experience a military failure and leave their villages. After the end of the war, peasants were still concerned that the

\textsuperscript{170} CBA, Jiu 1-002-068, 10-22.
\textsuperscript{171} CBA, Jiu 1-009-031, 57.
political unification under the Nationalist government would not last long. Bandits still lived in the mountains and could plunder peasants' properties at any time.\(^\text{172}\) Japanese and communists might return to the county and defeat the fragile regime. To minimize the possibility of paying double taxes, peasants chose to delay their tax payments and refused to cooperate with town officials.

Moreover, peasants were uncertain whether local officials would provide them with good public services or steal their resources. Widespread tax evasion among *bao* leaders and the use of violence against peasants exposed the entrepreneurial nature of officials. Many officials also immediately quitted their positions and moved to another county after committing fraudulent activities.\(^\text{173}\) The high official turnover rate indicated that powerholders were uninterested in the social welfare of local communities. Moreover, some officials participated in elections under the threat of bandits and served their interest.\(^\text{174}\) They also colluded with collaborationists who changed their names and continued seizing power after the end of the war.\(^\text{175}\) The mistrust of local officials led many peasants to reject their tax payments even though officials visited their houses and persuaded them to pay their taxes many times. To minimize the risk of exploitation, peasants only paid their taxes under the supervision of a county government's agent.

\(^{172}\) CBA, Jiu 1-009-031, 116-118.
\(^{173}\) CBA, Jiu 1-002-068, 258-260.
\(^{175}\) CBA, Jiu 1-002-064, 7-8; Jiu 1-002-067, 45-49.
Peasants were willing to cooperate with town offices and pay high taxes if they trusted local officials. On October 27, 1945, ten peasants from the tenth bao of Hongtang Town wrote a complaint against bao leader Shao and accused him of levying additional forty jin of grains of mu without their consent. Another nine peasants from the tenth bao also wrote a letter to the government and defended Shao. These nine peasants claimed that:

The masses elected Shao as bao leader in May when the village experienced exploitation from the enemies and national traitors. We were able to survive thanks to Zhao's safeguard. After the end of the war, Zhao continued serving as bao leader and actively participated in the movement of purging national traitors. He followed the rules and never played a trick during tax collection. Some individuals framed officials to evade taxes... In the name of justice, we volunteer to demonstrate that bao leader Shao Lingui neither abused power nor levied illegitimate taxes.

Official Shao demonstrated his integrity by protecting peasants from suppression and fighting against national traitors. Town leader also wrote a clarification letter to the county government and proved that local taxes were used to repay debts and that Shao had given the right paperwork to peasants. This was the only case in which villagers from the same bao had conflicting views over local governors.

Hongtang peasants and officials overcame the prisoner's dilemma by applying the tit-for-tat strategy. Imagine that a peasant interacted with a local official during the tax collection. The peasant could choose to pay or evade taxes, and the official could either follow the rules and levy legitimate taxes (T₁) or charge an additional and illegal amount of taxes (T₂). The official provided governmental services (S) with the peasant no matter whether the peasant evaded or payed his taxes. Also, assume that

176 CBA, Jiu 1-009-031, 107-108.
177 CBA, Jiu 1-009-031, 76-77.
178 CBA, Jiu 1-009-031, 105-106.
the value of services was smaller than the sum of legitimate and illegitimate taxes. This model approximates what was experienced in many parts of Cixi and helps explain the high degree of tax evasion among its peasants. As the formal model below illustrates, "defect" was the dominating strategy for both sides. Both the peasant and the official would receive higher benefits if they committed unlawful acts and they avoided undertaking the risk of cooperation given that the other side had the incentive to cheat. Most towns officials collected taxes from peasants only once and they were trapped in this depressing dilemma. Hongtang peasants from the tenth bao, however, established a long-term relationship with the local official. Both sides agreed to cooperate with each other and continued playing the same strategy during and after the war. Deviant individuals neither broke the agreement between the two sides nor made game players retaliate against each other. Hongtang peasants and officials played repeated games and practiced the most effective way of actualizing cooperation.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Official</th>
<th>Peasant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooperate</td>
<td>Cooperate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperate</td>
<td>S - T₁</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T₁ - S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defect (tax evasion)</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- S</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. The Model of One-Shot Game between a Peasant and a Local Official

179 In Robert Axelrod's study of evolutionary game theory, he argues that human beings are not willing to collaborate with each other if they play a short-term game with each other. See Axelrod, *The Complexity of Cooperation*, 25. Axelrod also argues that the tit-for-tat strategy is very effective for players who play the game of prisoner's dilemma for more than two times to achieve cooperation. See Axelrod, "Effective Choice in the Prisoner's Dilemma," 3-25.

180 I build this formal model based on Masahiko Aoki's model of state equilibrium. See Masahiko Aoki, *Toward A Comparative Institutional Analysis* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2001), 154. One distinction between his model and mine is that I do not incorporate the cost of unlawful acts (e.g. the peasant may receive punishment from the state for evading taxes) into the model. I make this
Investigating Tax Evasion and Making Legal Decisions

When town offices and peasants conflicted with each other over taxes, they usually reached the county government rather than the court for help. Most town offices had the manpower to resolve individual tax evasion cases, but peasants mistrusted them and refused to comply unless a county government's agent intervened. The government monopolized judicial power over administrative litigation and peasant tax evasion. It first investigated legal cases, negotiated with officials or peasants, and transferred cases to the court if it intended to give harsh punishment. It also had the power of ordering the court to release detainees even after the court began its judicial process.\textsuperscript{181}

The tax controversy in Guomu Town demonstrated the asymmetric power between the county government and the court and illustrated how this power relation shaped peasants' collective action. In October 1945, the town office invited peasants and former local officials to a tax auditing conference. The office concluded that each tenant owed 18.5 jin of grains per mu to the office, but it levied 26.5 jin of grains in November. On behalf of town inhabitants, peasant Zhao wrote a complaint against town officials to the county government and asked the government to investigate this issue.\textsuperscript{182} Exploitation continued and forced enraged peasants to re-elect Zhao as their representative, who reported the issues to the provincial government in June 1946.

\textsuperscript{181} One example occurred in Luotuoqiao Town. The court detained a former town leader because he was suspected of corrupting cultural grains. This official then wrote a letter to the supervisor and asked for help. He claimed that he was never involved with corruption and he had to attend his marriage in Shanghai. The supervisor let the court release him for several days and resume the litigation process after his marriage was over. See CBA, Jiu 1-002-068, 261-262, 267-270.

\textsuperscript{182} CBA, Jiu 1-009-031, 110-111, 115.
Town official Li framed Zhao for fabricating stamps on tax receipts and the police arrested Zhao on June 17. A hundred peasants gathered on the second day, left their village before the sunrise, walked fifty li, and arrived at the bureau of the county government to beg for help. Submitting to the will of people, the government temporarily release Zhao and transferred this "hot potato" to the county court. After the court detained Zhao on June 27, five hundred peasants gathered before the offices of the county government and the local party branch on July 1. The collective action led to the triumph of the peasants, as officials accepted the peasants’ demand to investigate tax collection and withdrew this case. Throughout the whole year, peasants always strategized to take up direct negotiations with the county government. They never sought legal assistance from the county court because they figured that the government possessed the ultimate judicial power. The court was so weak that it let peasants and the county government arbitrarily alter its judicial process.

Without an independent judicial power, the county court became an ineffective institution that could not break the collusion between town offices and the police. In Luotuoqiao town, peasants prosecuted tax collector Wu for corruption and collaboration at the county court. Wu concealed himself and the local police protected Wu from detention. The court had to make a compromise and allowed the police to

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183 1 standard unit of li equals 0.31 miles or 0.5 kilometers. See Li, *Village Governance in North China*, 30.
184 "Ci Guomu Xiangmin Wubai Yuren, Qingyuan Shifang Zhao Yongquan" 慈郭姆鄉民五百餘人，情願釋放趙永銓 [Five Hundred Peasants from Cixi Guomu Town Asked to Release Zhao Yongquan], *Shishi Gongbao*, July 5, 1946, 5.
185 "Duanping: Zhao Yongquan An" 短評: 趙永銓案 [Short Comments: Zhao Yongquan Case], *Shishi Gongbao*, July 5, 1946, 5.
mediate disputes with peasants on behalf of Wu. The court did not punish Wu, while Wu and the police retaliated against the peasants by beating and arresting peasant leaders after the announcement of litigation results.\(^\text{186}\) Running away, concealing, and making connections with power holders, town officials sought various ways of escaping the judicial process in Cixi. Few individuals, as a result, counted on the powerless court to deliver justice unless they believed that the county government failed to do so.

The mechanism of conflict resolution began with a tax investigation. The county government sent a supervisor to a town if a tax evasion or malfeasance case was reported, and the supervisor worked with the local tax auditing committee (qingsuan weiyuanhui). The first major issue that the supervisor confronted was the chaotic paperwork. Since local officials collected the public fund to finance at least four different institutions, they had to create separate payment papers for each tiny amount of tax. In Jiangzhong Town, for example, peasants received a payment paper in November 1945 that required them to pay 30 jin of “public service fees” (weilao jingfei). The exact purpose of this tax was unknown, but the tax rate was only about 1.6 jin of grains per mu.\(^\text{187}\) In many towns, either peasants accumulated too many tax payment papers and receipts and lost some of them, or tax collectors forgot to give paperwork to peasants and miscalculated the tax amount.

The second major challenge was to grasp local fiscal practices during and after the Japanese occupation period and to decipher specific terminologies on accounting books. In towns such as Changshiqiao, there were eleven types of expenditure and

\(^{186}\) CBA, Jiu 1-002-067, 45-49. 
\(^{187}\) CBA, Jiu 1-002-068, 14.
around fifty different expenditure items between July 1945 and April 1946. Many items were either temporary taxes levied before the end of the occupation or additional taxes collected to repay debts.\(^{188}\) Town officials may have miscalculated tax amount on these miscellaneous accounting books, and some even became suspected of corruption because of a wrong decimal point.\(^{189}\)

Without formalized rules and regulations over tax accounting, fiscal decentralization created great barriers for the local state to intervene in tax controversies. Supervisors spent several months on resolving individual cases and struggled with making accurate calculations on each household and enforcing tax payments because of massive paperwork, chaotic accounting books, and the loopholes in the fiscal system. Sometimes they had to re-audit parts of the tax collection due to miscalculations or new proof of payment. Distinct tax policies and tax enforcement logistics in different towns also made it almost impossible for the government to capture a complete and accurate picture of the rural economy.\(^{190}\)

The county government tended to make lenient legal decisions on town officials and peasants after the verification of tax evasion. The supervisor signed a new agreement with a *bao* leader or a peasant and required him to pay the full amount of owed grains before a new deadline. Officials and peasants received no punishment if they delivered their grains on time, but they would face a trial at the county court if they failed to do so.\(^{191}\) In Changshiqiao Town, peasant representatives were furious at the dishonesty of *bao* leaders and determined to prosecute them at the county court.

\(^{188}\) CBA, Jiu 1-002-068, 228-234.
\(^{189}\) CBA, Jiu 1-002-068, 41-42, 256-257, 273.
\(^{190}\) Scott, *Seeing like a State*, 80-83.
\(^{191}\) CBA, Jiu 1-002-068, 53, 192, 202.
These officials begged the supervisor to delay or remiss their tax payments, but he insisted that the county government should send the police and arrest them. The government, however, did not want to give harsh punishments to bao leaders and asked him to cautiously deal with these officials.192 The county government avoided disciplining town officials because severe punishment would further increase the official turnover rate and create the vacuum of executive positions. The training of new officials would also lag policy implementation. The local state's over-reliance on town offices for governance lowered the effectiveness of bottom-up supervision.

The legal case in Yangpu Town showed that the county government avoided giving harsh punishments on peasants, even though they initiated collective violence against officials. In a village of the first bao, peasant Ye rented 33 mu of land and evaded 171 jin of public fund. He refused to pay his taxes when three town officials went to his house on April 16, 1946. His wife left the house, hit the gongs at the center of the village, and shouted for help. Around a hundred peasants surrounded tax collectors, and several peasants beat an official named Wang, who was severely injured and had to pay 50,000 fabi for his medical care. In a report sent to the county government, the head of police wrote:

Yangpu Town peasants live on the seashore and do not fear authority. It is difficult to implement policies in this town. When town officials collected taxes at the village, the cunning peasants not only refused to obey the policy, but also initiated a collective violence against official Wang. Wang was almost beaten to death.

Nine peasants went through the judicial process and seven of them belonged to the largest kinship group Ye in the village. Three peasants were found guilty, and they

192 CBA, Jiu 1-002-068, 221-224.
had to pay their owed grains, compensated Wang’s medical costs, and promised to never make the same mistakes ever again. According to Republican criminal law, individuals who committed violence against government officials when officials were fulfilling their civic duty would be charged, arrested, fined up to 300 

{\textit{fabi}}, or faced a three-year prison sentence.\footnote{\textit{Zhonghua Minguo Xingfa (Minguo 23 Nian Lifu 24 Nian Gongbu)} 中華民國刑法 (民國 23 年立法 24 年公布) [The Criminal Law of Republican China (Formulated in 1934 and Announced in 1935)], Wikisource, last modified September 30, 2011, https://zh.wikisource.org/wiki/%E4%B8%AD%E8%8F%AF%E6%B0%91%E5%9C%8B%E5%88%91%E6%B3%95_(%E6%B0%91%E5%9C%8B23%E5%B9%B4%E7%AB%8B%E6%B3%9524%E5%B9%B4%E5%85%AC%E5%B8%83).} Three Yangpu peasants received none of these penalties and were only held legally liable for Wang’s medical costs. The bail sheet that they received indicated that they were irresponsible not to the court but to the county government. The writer of the sheet first wrote down “the court” (sifa chu), and then crossed it out and replaced it with “government” (zhengfu).\footnote{CBA, Jiu 1-002-068, 60-62, 99, 120-132.}

The county government was benevolent toward peasants because it intended to minimize the risk of popular uprisings. The Nationalist state aimed to maintain social order in rural societies to peacefully rebuild its army and economy.\footnote{Eastman, \textit{Seeds of Destruction}, 73; Pepper, \textit{Civil War in China}, 429-430.} While the tax controversies in Guomu and Luotuoqiao towns demonstrated that villagers were willing to undertake the risk of retaliation and seek justice for their leaders, violence in Yangpu and Zhujiang towns indicated the possibility of radicalization under the leadership of wealthy tenants. For example, in Zhujiang Town, two wealthy tenants evaded taxes and led fifty peasants to initiate violence against the supervisor. The police suppressed the movement, and two peasant leaders apologized to the supervisor.\footnote{CBA, Jiu 1-002-068, 66-77.} The strong social cohesion of peasant communities increased the
likelihood of collective action against governmental bodies and destabilized the power structure. The social structure of rural villages discouraged the county government from giving severe punishments to peasants who committed unlawful acts.

Social Structure and Collective Action

In Cixi, peasants joined collective action to resist tax escalation and wrongdoing, and they followed the instructions of wealthy tenants as their leaders. The unit of collective action was the village except in Guomu Town. Most of these wealthy tenants did not take leadership positions in formal institutions such as town offices and national schools, and they established their prestige by challenging powerholders and defending communal interest.197 Peasant leaders not only possessed the skills of reading official documents and writing formal complaints, but also understood the structure of political and legal institutions at county and provincial levels. They also had sufficient wealth to hire a lawyer, and some even had connections with journalists who worked for major local newspapers. Leaders, therefore, were able to determine the strategies of collective resistance and to help rural communities seek legal assistance outside the county government.

One strategy that peasant leaders took was to make the Provincial Higher Court delegate judicial power to the county court and let the latter make autonomous legal decisions over administrative litigation. In Yunhu town, 59 peasants from a village in the third bao prosecuted town leader Luo for levying illegitimate taxes and using violence. They were disappointed that the county government made a lenient legal

197 CBA, Jiu1-005-015, Jiu 1-005-042, Jiu 1-008-002, Jiu 1-008-003, Jiu 1-008-004.
decision. Peasant leaders Sun and Liu wrote complaints to the central and provincial Executive Yuan, the central and provincial Control Yuan, the provincial government, and the provincial party branch.\textsuperscript{198} Leaders expected these institutions to punish town leader Luo and compensate villagers, but this first attempt failed. After receiving orders from the provincial government, the county government transferred this case to the Bureau of Martial Law (\textit{junfa chu}). Liu and Sun suspected that the county government did not intend to punish Luo because Luo did not violate any martial law. They then wrote a second complaint to the provincial Department of Civil Affairs and asked bureaucrats to transfer the case to the Zhejiang High Court.\textsuperscript{199} As the county court lost its judicial power over local litigation, Sun and Liu correctly figured out that only way forward was letting the High Court intervene in the case.\textsuperscript{200} Yunhu peasants eventually succeeded in making the Cixi county court make the ultimate judicial decision without the intervention of the county government.\textsuperscript{201}

The Yunhu case proved that appealing to a provincial-level institution in an administrative litigation was bureaucratically inefficient and complicated. Peasant leaders Liu and Sun understood different types of laws, patiently communicated with

\textsuperscript{198} According to the Constitution of Republic of China, the central and provincial governments had five branches (Yuan): Executive Yuan, Legislative Yuan, Judicial Yuan, Examination Yuan, and Control Yuan. The Control Yuan was responsible for impeachment, supervision and investigation of officials. See "Our History," The Control Yuan Republic of China, last accessed Nov 11, 2017, http://www.cy.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=6036&CtNode=989&mp=21. The function of the Executive Yuan was similar to the executive branch of the government in the U.S.


\textsuperscript{200} According to Republican laws, the legal hierarchy was Supreme Court, High Court, and County Court. If plaintiff or defender did not agree with the litigation result determined by the county court, he or she was able to appeal at High Court. See "Fayuan Zuzhi Fa."

\textsuperscript{201} CBA, Jiu 1-005-053, Jiu 1-006-019.
several political institutions at both provincial and county levels, and succeeded in bypassing the county government’s control over the local court. Apart from their legal and political knowledge, the long-term meticulous planning was another contributing factor for peasants' success, as both leaders began fundraising lawsuit fees three months before the litigation began.202 Since the accessibility of the masses to prosecute officials was very limited, ordinary peasants heavily relied on their leaders' planning to defend their interest.

Another major strategy was to publicize the experience of exploitation in the newspaper *Shishi Gongbao* and to exert pressure on governmental bodies. Founded by a patriot Jin Zhenxiang during the May Fourth movement, *Shishi Gongbao* was the largest newspaper in Ningbo with an approximate daily volume of seven thousand.203 It took a leftist stance and supported the labor movement.204 Journalists reported international, national, and local news and made two editorials every day that usually sympathized with peasants and criticized government. In addition to helping people make public announcements, the newspaper created a section named "Readers' Voices" that allowed individuals to publish their articles of critique and concern about government's policies.205 Many Cixi peasants took advantage of this opportunity and

202 CBA, Jiu 1-006-019, 51-54.
203 The May Fourth movement occurred in 1919. A massive number of patriotic students protested against the Beijing government's weak response to the Versailles Treaty, which transferred the control over Qingdao from Germans to the Japanese; Ningbo Bureau of Archive, Jiu 6, Xinwenzhi Zazhi Dengji Shenqing Shu [The Registration Form of Newspapers and Journals].
205 "Duzhe Husheng Gaoli" 讀者呼聲稿例 [The Rules of Reader’s Voices Articles], *Shishi Gongbao*, August 9, 1946, 5.
questioned town offices' policies. Town officials were concerned about their public images and most of them responded to peasants on the second day after the newspaper published peasants' letters.206

Unlike many peasant groups who wrote letters in the section of "Readers' Voices", Luotuoqiao peasant leaders directly contacted journalists and asked them to report the tax wrongdoing. Journalists trusted the peasants' words, reported the violence and abuse of power, and wrote a short editorial. Journalists argued that county governments must check unlawful acts of town officials to check the rise of peasant uprisings in post-war Zhejiang.207 On the second day, both Luotuoqiao town leader and tax collector Wu published an article in the newspaper. They denied peasants’ prosecutions and accused them of distorting facts and evading taxes. Editors realized that officials ignored the violence and titled these responses with “no single word about arresting peasants.”208 The editorial board rarely reported a peasant uprising in two consecutive days. Apart from directing public opinion into favoring peasants, Luotuoqiao peasant leaders also prepared for the litigation by hiring a lawyer and sending complaints to the provincial government. They succeeded in

206 There were many cases like this. For instance, in April 1947, peasants from Zhuangqiao Town posted their experience on Shishi Gongbao, and demanded the county government to explain whether the town office's new taxation policy was legal or not. The town office then posted an article on the second day and tried to justify its actions. See "Zhuangqiao Xiangmin De Husheng, You Maigu Yaoshou Juanshui" 莊橋鄉民的呼聲, 又買穀要收捐稅 [Voices from Zhuangqiao Inhabitants, Purchasing Grains and Collecting Taxes], Shishi Gongbao, April 27, 1947, 3; "Dafu Zhuangqiao Xiangmin De Husheng" 答復莊橋鄉民的呼聲 [Respond to Zhuangqiao Inhabitants' Voices], Shishi Gongbao, Apr 28, 1947, 3.


making the provincial government intervene in the case and forcing the police to respond to the accusations in the newspaper.\textsuperscript{209}

The significance of peasant leaders in organizing collective resistance explains why villagers united and attempted to rescue them in places like Zhujiang and Luotuoqiao towns. Without their political leaders, most peasants were incapable of communicating with proper institutions and defending their interest. To maximize the chance of gaining exemption from illegal taxation and overthrowing exploitative officials, it was rational for an individual peasant to participate in the collective action. For opportunists who evaded taxes, they also expected to take advantage of peasant leaders and avoid the county government’s investigation. In addition, since leaders defended villagers and suffered from unfair treatment, many villagers felt that they were morally obligated to help their leaders. Most villages had one large descent group, and strong kinship ties between villagers lowered the organization cost of collective action. As the leader of popular protest in Luotuoqiao Town said during the interrogation: "peasant leaders should not be arrested and the rest of fifty peasants should replace them instead."\textsuperscript{210} With a high level of social cohesion and the leadership of wealthy tenants, rural communities were capable of taking effective collective action and retaining scarce resources. Social mobilization challenged the maintenance of social order and led the county government to avoid giving severe punishments to peasant leaders. Lenient legal decisions, however, further encouraged peasant tax evasion and resulted in a self-perpetuating fiscal crisis.

\textsuperscript{209} CBA, Jiu 1-002-067.
\textsuperscript{210} Ibid., 27-43.
Conclusion

The tax controversies in Cixi shed light on the larger patterns of social conflicts and collective action in post-war Jiangnan. On the one hand, political tensions in rural societies shifted from county governments and peasants to town offices and peasants. Tax evasion, violence, corruption, and collusion with the police was widespread among town officials. In response to such predatory actions, peasants used their supervisory power and sought legal protection from county governments. The most extreme case occurred in early 1946, when more than a thousand peasants from seven

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Northern Zhejiang counties initiated violence, destroyed town offices, and beat bao and town leaders. Peasants claimed that these officials had collaborated with the Japanese and continued exploiting them after the end of the war, and they disagreed with the county governments’ judicial decisions. Peasants never challenged county governments' authority and quickly ended their social movement after governments gave harsh punishments to officials. The alliance between county governments and peasants completely changed their antagonistic relationship during the Nanjing Decade and consolidated the Nationalist state's political legitimacy in post-war rural communities.

On the other hand, rural societies experienced the rise of collective action at an unprecedented level. Warfare and political turmoil intensified competition over scarce resources and forced peasants to take defensive strategies against exploitative powers. Many peasants joined local resistance organizations and attempted to deliver fewer grains to landlords as hedged against hyperinflation. They also sought economic protection from local powerholders by communicating with the press and state organizations. Collective violence against town offices in Ningbo and Northern Zhejiang showed how peasants formed cross-village organizations and took radical actions if formal institutions failed to deliver justice. While this case study examined the organization of collective action based on a large number of legal

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212 Pepper, *Civil War in China*, 163-165.
215 In Dinghai County, several hundred peasants fought with the police after a tax collection controversy and resulted in sixteen causalities. See "Dinghai Jingdui Cuigu Jiabao Dongao Xiang Minzhong Saodong," *The Dinghai Police Used Violence to Enforce Tax Collection; Dongao Town Peasants Initiated A Commotion*, *Shishi Gongbao*, July 26, 1946, 5.
documents, most other secondary research either study peasants in an insufficient depth or use primary sources such as newspapers that offer little information about peasant organization. That said, we cannot conclude that the patterns of political mobilization in Cixi represented all of post-war Jiangnan. It would be worthwhile to further study the causes of collective action in other localities.

Social conflicts and peasant collective action challenged fiscal and political reconstruction in post-war Jiangnan. Although the Cixi county government achieved short-term political stability, it created an inefficient governmental structure and lost substantial tax revenues. The government established a symbiotic relationship with peasants and local officials, but it failed to find a solution to reconcile private interests with the state's interest. The most important question then becomes: was it possible for the state and local communities to define the public interest and to actualize a common goal?
Chapter 3

Between the State and Society: The Politics of Educational Reconstruction

In early September 1946, the Cixi county government passed the bill drafted by the legislative the Consultative Council and announced the policy of "soliciting" (quan mu) cultural grains to finance rural schools. This new policy set a uniform rate of donation for every tenant and landlord based on the area of land that he rented or owned. Citizen Yang Jiarui sensed that the Council planned to levy a new land tax and used the term "soliciting" to belie its real purpose. He sent a critique to Shishi Gongbao and portrayed members of the Consultative Council as absurd and as rapacious as collaborationists. He also questioned the legitimacy of cultural grains policy as it violated the central government's laws.216 Although several members of the Council prosecuted Yang for slander, the trial did not arrest the public debate over cultural grains.217 Led by two prestigious members of the gentry Qian Taixi and Wei Youfang, the debate lasted for one month and the Council eventually made concessions to politically active citizens. Without the intervention of the county government, Cixi citizens actualized a form of self-government and made autonomous decisions over rural education.

The legal controversy of cultural grains stemmed from the failure to motive citizens to fully commit themselves in educational reconstruction. During the "raising fifty-thousand mu of school-owned land" movement, the political mobilization was

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216 "Qing Cixixian Wuan Muzheng Wenhuagu" 請慈溪縣勿按畝徵文化榖 [Cixi County Please Do Not Collect Cultural Grains Based on the Area of Land], Shishi Gongbao, September 10, 1946, 5.
ineffective to make the masses abandon their traditional cultural practices and donate their land to schools. The members of the Consultative Council aimed to expand the national educational system, but they were running out of options, as the donation campaign was a fiasco and the national law forbade them from levying new taxes. The Council members, as a result, had to turn to the ambiguous term "soliciting" by broadening the target of donation to every individual and blurring the boundary between taxation and donation. Resource shortage and ineffective political mobilization led to a legislative problem and the outbreak of a public debate.

The politics of educational reconstruction showed how the state's vision of citizenship conflicted with the practice of citizenship in rural communities. The Nationalist state believed that citizenship did not belong to every individual but only to those who were well educated and once served as a public servant.218 It tried to cultivate new citizens that recognized their national identities, took the initiative in communal affairs, and developed moral character such as an absolute loyalty to the party-state.219 The gentry, on the other hand, participated in school building but lacked interest in fulfilling the state's mission of national reconstruction. Many abused the autonomy of school management that the local state granted to them and prioritized communal interest. The post-war rural society did not experience a galvanized nationalist movement but a clash between two political ideologies. Although the state failed to actualize its vision of educational development, it did

219 Culp, *Articulating Citizenship*. 
succeed in establishing political legitimacy and building effective legislative institutions.

**From Raising School-owned Land to the Cultural Grains Policy**

In December 1945, the county government initiated the movement of "raising fifty-thousand mu of school-owned land" and intended to convert religious institutions to 140 primary schools. Governors solicited temples and public land from local clans and asked wealthy landlords to donate their assets. The nature of donation was equivocal in this context because it implied the possibility of enforcement and confiscation. As the table below illustrates, the government was lenient toward landlords but asked for the full donation of land that was used for financing religious activities. The Nationalist regime called the clan-owned temples "cult temples" (yin'an) and defined them as religions that generated no values, lacked reliable evidence to prove their arguments, and stirred up peasants. The state aimed to cleanse "superstitious" beliefs to extend its control over society and to establish the dominance of the party in public life.220 The county government used both "confiscation" and "donation" in its implementation of the plan, which blurred the boundary between these two terms and created space for policy flexibility.

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The Type of Property | Categories | The Standard of Donation
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Temple | Public management by local societies | 100 percent
| Private ownership and management | at least 50 percent
| Clan ownership and management | 100 percent
Ancestral Shrine (cichan) | Clan ownership and management | 50 percent
Fundraising Property (huichan) | Clan ownership and management; for religious activities | 100 percent
Landlords | Owned 100 to 300 mu of land | 5 percent of annual income
| Owned 300 to 500 mu of land | 10 percent of annual income
| Owned 500 to 1000 mu of land | 15 percent of annual income
| Owned more than 1000 mu of land | 20 percent of annual income

Table 3. The Categories of Properties and the Standard of Donation

In practice, the county government did not provoke any open opposition from rural communities, as it was cautious toward local religious practices and did not take enforcement. Cixi peasants continued organizing Dragon God rituals to pray for rain during an arid season, and used rents gained from the fundraising property to hold a huge ceremony to welcome the gods (yingshen saihui). On the New Year’s Eve, they went to the biggest temple Qing Guandao, worshipped the Buddhist Goddess

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222 "Dongshan Yingshen Saihui" 东山迎神赛会 [Welcome the Gods in Dongshan], Cixi Bao, Aug 16, 1946, 3; Ling Zhonghuan 凌仲煥, “Xiangqi Le Lao Cixi He Lao Zufu” 想起了老慈溪和老祖父 [Remembering Old Cixi and Old Grandfather], Cihu Shui 49 (2004): 26. Chinese peasants regarded the dragon god as the god that controlled rain and rivers, and they believed that the god would bring rain to them if they pleased it. See Duara, *Culture, Power and the State*, 32-33. With respect of yingshen saihui, this ritual had a long history since the Qing dynasty. The locals held it once a year and believed that gods would bring good health to them if gods were happy. See Cixi Bureau of Education, *Cixi Xian Zhanshi Xiangtu Changshi*. 
Guanyin, and made wishes of peace and fortune.\textsuperscript{223} Peasants also worshipped ancestors with their clan members and continued their rituals of bringing food in front of the tombs of their parents on specific dates.\textsuperscript{224} In addition, most Cixi merchants believed in the Guandi cult and made contracts in Guandi temples because Guandi symbolized honesty and loyalty (yi).\textsuperscript{225} There was a rich and diverse religious culture during the post-war period in Cixi, and every town had around five temples.\textsuperscript{226} As the county government was concerned that the suppression of religious activities might discourage rural communities to engage in school building, it neither forbade these activities nor confiscated public land.

The wealthy gentry were actively involved with the fundraising movement and made most of the contributions to local schools. The gentry raised land either by donating ancestral shrines or setting up schools in temples. In Shiqiao Town, the largest clan Shen donated 2,100 \textit{mu} of land to three local schools.\textsuperscript{227} In Cicheng, the Feng and Yu clans respectively donated 2,000 and 600 \textit{mu} of land for building and expanding local schools.\textsuperscript{228} We can take all of the possible factors that affected the


\textsuperscript{225} Wang Weichen 王伟臣, "Zhijie: Cixi De Zhongzhou Xian" 直街: 慈城的中轴线 [Zhi Street: The Center of Cicheng], \textit{Cihu Shui} 65 (2013): 3-4. Guandi (A.D. 162-220) was a warrior during the Three Kingdoms, and he became a popular god in rural China through a variety of media such as drama and literature, in particular the \textit{Romance of the Three Kingdoms}. In most rural societies, people treated Guandi as the god of loyalty, the protector god of temples, and the god of wealth. See Duara, \textit{Culture, Power and the State}, 139-140.

\textsuperscript{226} CBA, Jiu 1-002-091, Jiu 1-002-093, Jiu 1-002-094.

\textsuperscript{227} Shenshi Qiao Shenxu Luntang Shuaixian Zhudi Erqian Yibai Mu" 沈世橋沈敘倫堂率先助地二千一百畝 [The Shen Clan in Shiqiao Town First Donated 2,100 \textit{Mu} of Land]," \textit{CGJYYK} 2 (1946): 22.

\textsuperscript{228} "Ci Choumu Xuetian Yundong: Fengyu Liangxing Ji Xiangying" 慈籌募學田運動: 馮俞兩姓相應 [Raising School-owned Land Movement in Cixi: Feng and Yu Clans Responded], \textit{Ningbo Gongbao}, December 26, 1945.
area of school-owned land at the town level, such as town population, numbers of peasant parents, merchant parents, schools and students, and school management model, and enter them in a multiple regression equation.\(^{229}\) As the table below illustrates, the most crucial factor was the number of committees of fund custodians dominated by one single clan (Committee Type 2), which had the highest coefficient and lowest p-value.\(^{230}\) The clan-based donation, therefore, was the driving force of educational development in early 1946.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Number</td>
<td>-195.077</td>
<td>0.168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peasant Parent Number</td>
<td>-0.526</td>
<td>0.782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchant Parent Number</td>
<td>3.725</td>
<td>0.161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Number</td>
<td>-1.705</td>
<td>0.305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>0.045</td>
<td>0.158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee Type 1</td>
<td>248.497</td>
<td>0.124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee Type 2</td>
<td>548.457</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee Type 3</td>
<td>329.499</td>
<td>0.040</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Constant = 0.811          |             |         |
| Adjusted R-squared value = 0.937 |         |

Table 4. Multiple Regression of School-Owned Land (Town as unit, n = 26)\(^{231}\)

Most gentry did not donate land for philanthropic purposes but used the land to accumulate the educational resources for their clans. Although national schools were

\(^{229}\) I count the numbers of three types of committees of fund custodians: all of committee members came from one single clan; more than half of the members came from one clan, and members came from multiple clans with equivalent numbers. I respectively name them "Committee Type 1," "Committee Type 2," and "Committee Type 3" in my model.

\(^{230}\) CBA, Jiu 1-008-002, Jiu 1-008-003, Jiu 1-008-004; "Cixi Xian Geji Guomin Xuexiao Xuetian Yilan Biao" 慈谿縣各級國民學校學田數一覽表 [The Table of School-Owned Land in Every National School in Cixi County], \(CGJYYK\) 2 (1946): 29-35. P-value represents the probability of the occurrence of a given event in a statistical hypothesis test. A small p-value (\(\leq 0.05\)) usually indicates strong evidence of a correlation between two factors.

\(^{231}\) I appreciate the assistance of the Wesleyan QAC tutoring program for the model presentation. Adjusted R-square value tells how much variation of dependent variable can be explained by an independent variable. In this case, 93.7% of variation is explained by this model.
supposed to be public, schools that were controlled by one clan provided clan
members with certain advantages such as free tuition and scholarships.232 Most of the
Yu clan’s donation went to the school founded by the clan, and over 65 percent of
Shen clan’s donation went to two local schools founded and managed by the Shen
clan.233 We do not know how the Feng clan used its donation, but the local middle
school’s student records showed that 34 clan members studied in it during the post-
war period, the second largest clan group at the school.234 Wealthy and prestigious
clans such as the Feng clan built up cultural capital through investment in education,
books, and libraries.235 The accumulation of capital provided clan members with
great educational advantages, and the top eight clans constituted 50 percent of the
total number of new students in Cixi Middle School in 1946.236

As most gentry aimed to bolster the local standing of clans rather than to
improve the general level of education, educational inequality became serious during
the post-war period. Some schools had more than 1,000 mu of land, while around 80
national schools did not have one single mu. In towns with low levels of
commercialization, schools relied on school-owned land as their source of income.
The average area of land that they owned was 44.3 mu, 1.5 times lower the average

232 Wang, Qiannian Wangzu, 798.
233 "Ci Choumu Xuetian Yundong," Ningbo Gongbao; “Shenshi Qiao Shenxu Luntang Shuaixian
Zhudi Erqian Yibai Mu,” 22.
234 ZBA, L032-000-156, Cixi Xianzhong 35 Niandu Yuansheng 慈溪縣中 35 年度員生 [Students and
Faculty Members of Cixi Middel School in 1946]; L032-000-157, Cixi Xianzhong 36 Niandu
Yuansheng 慈溪縣中 36 年度員生 [Students and Faculty Members of Cixi Middel School in 1947],
ZBA; L032-000-158, Cixi Xianzhong 37 Niandu Yuansheng 慈溪縣中 37 年度員生 [Students and
Faculty Members of Cixi Middel School in 1948].
of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education, ed. J. Richardson (New York: Greenwood,
1986), 241-258.
236 ZBA, Cixi Xianzhong 35 Niandu Yuansheng.
number. Moreover, Cixi peasants prioritized maximizing short-term economic interests over making a long-term investment in education. Although the state provided peasants with a literacy curriculum, most of peasants were uninterested in adult education and dropped schools. Many families struggling to maintain basic subsistence also forbade their children from studying, as they needed their children to help in the fields or take up menial work. For families who came from towns with scarce educational resources, children rarely had a chance to study in a middle school, while primary school education did not satisfy peasants' economic aspirations. With inactive peasants and gentry, the fundraising movement ended in a great failure. By the end of 1946, the county government only raised 12198.53 mu of land, about 28 percent of the original plan.

Apart from the fiasco of the fundraising campaign, the county government also struggled with resolving conflicts over school management. The appointment of the school principal was one of the most controversial issues. In Cixi, schools adopted an ad-hoc system to appoint school principals. In economically backward regions, the county government monopolized the right over appointment because local communities lacked sufficient resources to finance local schools. This

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238 Dui Fu 兌孚, "Zenyang Jiejue Banli Minjiaobu De Kunnan" 怎樣解決辦理民教部的困難 [How to Overcome the Difficulties of Establishing a Mass Education Department], Cixi Jiaoyu 3 (1948): 2.
240 CXJYZ, 185.
monopolization sometimes led to the critique of rural inhabitants when the
government fired some principals who gained respect from villagers but offended
bureaucrats working for the county Bureau of Education.\textsuperscript{241} To encourage people to
participate in educational reconstruction in economically advantaged towns, the
government ceded the power of determining school principals to local communities.
The local gentry, however, controlled the appointment and used schools to expand
their patronage networks. Some of them even attempted to resume traditional Chinese
private education.\textsuperscript{242} Rural inhabitants criticized the county government’ authoritarian
style of controlling local education, while the county government accused rural
communities of overreaching their power. Since both sides treated the appointment of
the school principal as the means of establishing dominance in rural education,
negotiation sometimes became very difficult.\textsuperscript{243}

In addition, many committees of fund custodians abused their rights and favored
maximizing their self-interest over following the state’s instructions. The county
government required every national school to establish such a committee and
transferred its control over school funding to this organization. Many committee
members embezzled school funding, paid low wages to teachers, and deceived the
county government for more economic resources. They used to be the local officials
during the Japanese occupation period and continued exercising their power after

\textsuperscript{241} Sanpu Baoxiao Xinpai Xiaozhang, Jibao Hui Renwei Butuo" 三浦保校新派校長, 基保會認為不妥 [Sanpu Bao School’s Committee of Fund Custodians Did Not Agree with the Appointment of New Bao School Principal], \textit{Cixi Bao}, February 22, 1948, 2.

\textsuperscript{242} Sun Demin 孫德民, "Wo Duiyu Gexin Cixi Jiaoyu De Yijian" 我對於革新慈溪教育的意見 [My Opinion about Cixi Education Reform], \textit{Cixi Jiaoyu} 3 (1948): 18

\textsuperscript{243} Fang Zichang 方子長, "Difang Jiaoyu Xingzheng Wenti Shangque" 地方教育行政問題商榷 [Discussion about the Local Education Administration], \textit{Cixi Jiaoyu} 2 (1948): 4-7.
In addition, some committees demanded school teachers to satisfy the local community's educational demands, such as canceling courses on music, art, and physical education and spending more time on teaching English and classical Chinese. Although the county government asked school principals and teachers to carry out the state’s educational policy, many of them chose to make connections with rural inhabitants and fawn on committee members. As the state lacked a consistent system of supervising school principals and bao and town leaders had limited power in schools, the efficiency of educational administration became very low.

In response to the crisis of school finance and management, the Consultative Council drafted the cultural grains policy in early September 1946 that aimed to finance schools in the new fall semester. As the legislative branch of the local government, the Council was primarily responsible for drafting policies and counseling the executive branch. Town representatives elected members of the Council, and the term limit for every member was two years. The Council could not formulate any policy that violated the central and provincial governments' laws. The legitimacy of the cultural grains policy was based on the Zhejiang provincial government's law drafted in November 1945. The law stated that "if the county government lacked the sufficient educational funding, the local representative
institution should determine the means of raising funding. The county government should pass the bill."²⁴⁸

The new policy radically changed the legal nature of donation during the school fundraising movement. While temples and public land were public in nature and the gentry were in charge of them, the new policy targeted every landlord and tenant like the land tax and asked them to donate cultural grains four jin per mu. The recipient of cultural grains was no longer local schools but the county government.²⁴⁹ The Council also reversed the bottom-up approach of financing schools, and it neither organized mass meetings to promulgate the new "donation" nor gave the autonomy in managing donation to rural communities. The distinction between donation and taxation, as a result, became confusing, and it led to a public debate in the newspapers.

The Press and Citizens

*Cixi Bao, Ningbo Ribao,* and *Shishi Gongbao* were three major newspapers that reported and published articles about the cultural grains policy debate. The Cixi county government founded *Cixi Bao* and the local party branch in Yin county sponsored *Ningbo Ribao* after 1945.²⁵⁰ Journalists and editors not only reported national, local, and sometimes international news, but also posted county government

policies and orders. Both newspapers also served as the platform for citizens to make public announcements, such as marriages and meetings. Because of its close relationship with the county government, *Cixi Bao* took a pro-government stance and censored some articles about the cultural grains policy written by citizens. Editors did not want to escalate conflicts and supported the government's plan for improving teachers' living conditions.\(^{251}\) Journalists reported citizens' support of the policy and avoided writing articles about their rejection and criticism.

Although the county government continued disseminating propaganda in the press during the post-war period, it did create a space for citizens to publicly discuss policies in the newspapers. On both *Cixi Bao* and *Ningbo Ribao*, the leading critics of the cultural grains policy were still able to make open criticism after public opinion began thwarting the policy. The Cixi county government also allowed local school teachers to found their own journals that discussed and sometimes criticized educational policies.\(^{252}\) For the independent newspaper *Shishi Gongbao*, although journalists often wrote critiques, published citizens' attack against town offices, and sometimes incurred criticism of distorting facts from governors, the state did not shut it down until 1948 when the press published articles on military secrets. Its founder resisted joining the Nationalist Party and hid some Communist Party members in the office, but his bold actions did not result in an immediate ban of the newspaper after the end of the war.\(^{253}\)

\(^{251}\) "Yanglao Xiansheng Tanhua Bihu" 楊老先生談話筆錄 [The Notes of the Interview with Mr. Yang], *Cixi Bao*, September 22, 1946, 3.

\(^{252}\) "Chuangkan Ci" 創刊詞 [The Preface], *CGJYYK* 1 (1946), 1-2; "Fakan Ci" 發刊詞 [The Preface], *Cixi Jiaoyu* 1 (1948): 1.

\(^{253}\) Jin Yujuan, "Wode Fuqin."
Qian Taixi and Wei Youfang were the two most important critics of the cultural grains policy during the public debate. A graduate from Fudan University at Shanghai, Qian was a famous calligrapher and gained national recognition for his distinct eastern Zhejiang style. He was also a prestigious educator and taught at several middle schools and primary schools before and during the war. Qian made close connections with local governors and merchants who took high positions in the central government and Shanghai financial institutions. Wei was also an experienced educator, as he taught at Zhejiang Higher New School (Zhejiang Gaodeng Xuetang) and Peking University during the late Qing and early Republican periods and at several middle schools in Ningbo since the Nanjing Decade. He became a significant local elite because of his contribution to Ningbo education and his brilliant students. One of his most famous students was Chen Bulei, the secretary of Chiang Kai-Shek. Wei also participated in local politics in late December 1945 by writing complaints to the county government and urging governors to forbid the Xiaozhong town office from collecting illegitimate taxes.

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257 CBA, Jiu 1-009-031, 3-20.
The format of the two gentry men’s article was unique in comparison with other writings in the newspapers. While most individuals published their articles about local governments in the section "Reader's Voices" at the corner of the fourth page of *Shishi Gongbao*, Qian and Wei posted theirs on the public announcement edition, the first page of local newspapers. To grab the attention from a wider audience in different Ningbo localities, Qian and Wei sent their articles to three major local newspapers: *Shishi Gongbao*, *Ningbo Ribao*, and *Cixi Bao*. In addition, the two men were among the very few individuals who claimed themselves as "citizens" in their

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newspaper writing. Most people called themselves "reader," defined themselves based on their occupations, or put their names in the articles.\textsuperscript{259} The term "citizen" also had a special political meaning for \textit{Shishi Gongbao} journalists and editors. From 1946 to 1947, they only used this term in their news titles in four cases: prosecuting national traitor Zhang Xiahun, the public grain policy debate, and the reforms of the postal system and the port.\textsuperscript{260} Journalists and editors believed that "citizens" should not exclusively focus on the interest of their own communities but participate in politics beyond their private interests.

Qian Taixi and Wei Youfang represented an ideal of Confucian ethics deeply embedded in the gentry culture. Qian and Wei came from the town where educational resources were most abundant and most local students were able to study at the local middle school. Although the government planned to use half of the donated cultural grains to increase teachers' incomes and to rebuild the Cixi Middle School, Qian and Wei prioritized public welfare over their self-interest.\textsuperscript{261} Such altruism was considered the essence of the ethical human being in Confucian philosophy, and

\textsuperscript{259} From August 1946 to May 1947, there were around 105 articles written by individuals and only four articles included the term "citizen". See "Difang Laobao Zhi" 地方老报纸 [The Local Old Newspapers], Cixi Library, last accessed March 31, 2018, https://www.nblib.cn/col/col1971/index.html.


drove many Cixi gentry to support and invest in public projects, such as schools, hospitals, and refugee shelters, even in economically difficult periods. Studying Confucian texts in their youth and practicing Confucian values throughout their whole lives, Qian and Wei manifested how traditional ethics integrated with modern politics and shaped the civic engagement in the late Republic period.

The Public Debate in the Newspapers

On September 10, 1946, Yang Jiarui paved the path for the public debate over the cultural grains policy and became the first person who openly criticized the Consultative Council's policy in the newspapers. Yang lived in Cicheng, and he was an ordinary man who neither took governmental positions nor served as a town representative. We have little insight into his motivation in defending peasants' interest, given that he came from the most commercialized town where most inhabitants were merchants rather than peasants. Yang attacked the term "soliciting" and argued that the Council violated the provincial education law. The provincial law granted the right of raising additional resources to the local Consultative Council but did not specify what approaches were legal or illegal. Yang interpreted that any form of raising resources based on the area of land was

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263 CBA, Jiu 1-005-042.

264 Cixi Bureau of Education, Cixi Xian Zhanshi Xiangtu Changshi.
illegitimate if the law did not state so. He also suggested that the Council should persuade wealthy businessmen and landlords to donate money to the Cixi Middle School. Enforcing every individual to pay for the reconstruction project was an unpopular policy. As news and rumors spread over the whole city, the Xiaozhong town office immediately held an emergency meeting in the afternoon. On September 11, a Shishi Gongbao journalist made a lengthy editorial about cultural grains and supported Yang's argument. He argued that many local legislative institutions frequently changed their policy goals and formulated self-contradictory policies, which eroded the Nationalist Party's political legitimacy in rural societies. The journalist suggested that the Council should clarify its policy with citizens and show how it followed the policies of both central and provincial governments.

Yang Jiarui's article caused some political problems but did not change the direction of the policy. The government-financed newspaper Cixi Bao constructed a narrative that portrayed Yang as a disruptor of a widely accepted policy. On September 12, Cixi Bao journalists reported on litigation against Yang and described his action as an "insult" and a "malicious attack" against the members of the Consultative Council. They also "demonstrated" the popularity of the policy by reporting claims of peasant support for cultural grains from the Xiaozhong town.

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265 "Zhenggao Yuan Yizhang" 正告袁議長 [Prosecute Senator Yuan], Cixi Bao, September 10, 1946, 1.
266 "Qing Cixixian Wuan Muzheng Wenhuagu," Shishi Gongbao.
267 "Ci Chouzheng Wenhua Gu Naode Mancheng Fenyu" 慈籌徵文化股鬧得滿城風雨 [Raising Cultural Grains in Cixi, News and Rumors Spread All over the City], Shishi Gongbao, Sep 13, 1946, 5; "Xiaozhong Zhen Daibiao Zhaokai Linshi Jinji Hui" 孝中鎮代表召開臨時緊急會 [Xiaozhong Town Representatives Held an Emergent Meeting], Cixi Bao, Sep 12, 1946, 3. Cicheng belonged to the Xiaozhong Town.
268 "Wenhuagu Shishui Zhunxu Zhengshou De" 文化穀是誰准許徵收的 [Who Allows to Collect Cultural Grains], Shishi Gongbao, September 11, 1946, 2.
office and the Committee of Peasants in Erliushi Town. On September 14, the Committee of Culture and Education Progress, the organization that was in charge of executing the cultural grains policy, made a public announcement that ordered peasants and landlords to give grains to the committee. The nature of the cultural grains policy thus appeared to be taxation rather than donation.

Prestigious gentry man Qian Taixi joined the public debate as policy execution began and exerted great pressure on the Consultative Council. Qian posted his article on the first pages of Cixi Bao and Shishi Gongbao from September 17 to 19. He first attacked the chaotic legislation process and argued that the cultural grains policy contradicted the Council's earlier policies that forbade town offices from collecting any local taxes apart from the public fund. The policy also violated the central government's law that prohibited any taxation or fundraising based on the land area except the land tax. In addition, Qian rejected the members of Council's rhetoric that the donation of cultural grains was based on an individual's purchasing power rather than the area of land. He criticized them for disregarding peasants' economic situations. Many peasants struggled in maintaining their families at the subsistence

269 "Erliushi Nonghui Yonghu Quanmu Wenhuagu" 二六市農會擁護勸募文化榖 [The Erliushi Town Committee of Peasants Supported the Policy of Soliciting Cultural Grains]; "Yang Jiarui Fabiao Wenzi You WuRu Canyuan Chu" 楊家瑞發表文字 有侮辱參員處 [Yang Jiarui's Words Insulted Members of the Consultative Council], Cixi Bao, September 12, 1946, 3. The Committee of Peasants was responsible for disseminating agrarian knowledge and improving rural production, see "Nonghui Fa (Minguo 19 Nina)" 《農會法(民國 19 年)》 The Law of the Committee of Peasants (1930), Wikisource, last modified December 3, 2011, https://zh.wikisource.org/wiki/%E8%BE%B2%E6%9C%83%E6%B3%95_%E6%B0%91%E5%9C%8B19%E5%B9%B4.


272 "Cixi Gongmin Qian Taixi Deng Duiyu WeiHu Jiofen Shuyan Zhuanzai Anmu Mugu Jiazhong Dianye FuDan Qishi" 慈谿公民錢太希等對於維護教育否認專在按畝募穀加重佃業負担啟事 [Cixi Citizen Qian Taixi Makes an Announcement about the Consultative Council Protected Education and
level during the post-war period. In response to Qian's article, Council members held a public press conference on September 17. They clarified that they intended to persuade citizens to donate rather than enforce them to pay certain amount. Council members also explained that they specified the amount of donation because they wanted to raise a sufficient amount of wealth to rebuild Cixi Middle School. They also claimed that most peasants and gentry supported this policy and only the minority distorted facts and tried to attack the government.

The Consultative Council's public announcement failed to placate the critics of the policy and led Wei Youfang to join the debate. On September 19, Qian and Wei sent formal letters to the national, provincial and provincial district governments and criticized the Council's violation of central government's laws. On September 25, they joined the meeting of the Xiaozhong town office and proposed that the county government should publicize its budget on educational spending and the distribution of cultural grains. They wanted to ensure that the government was neither embezzling public resources nor spending excessive resources on elite educational institutions. With transparent and complete information, citizens would have more incentives to make investments in the public education.

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273 Yi, "Baojia Zhidu Yazha Xiade Nongmin."

274 "Cidang Cannong Fuzeren Zhaodai Yong Gejie Jijizhe" 赤黨參農負責人 招待甬各界及記者 [People in Charge of Cixi Local Party Branch, the Consultative Council and the Committee of Peasants Welcomed Ningbo Journalists and Citizens], *Shishi Gongbao*, Sep 18, 1946, 5.

275 "Ci Gongmin Wei Zhongche Deng Diancheng Gefang Fandui Wenhuagu" 慈公民仲車等電呈各方反對文化榖 [Cixi Citizen Wei Zhongche Informed Different Institutions and Opposed Cultural Grains], *Shishi Gongbao*, September 21, 1946, 5.

276 "Xiaozhong Zhen Zhendaihui Linshi Huiyi Jilu" 孝中鎮鎮代會臨時會議紀錄 [The Conference Minutes of the Committee of Xiaozhong Town Representatives], *Cixi Bao*, September 29, 1946, 3.
In addition to the gentry's political demands, school teachers who experienced a severe financial predicament put immense pressure on the Consultative Council. Most schools relied on students' tuition for their incomes and experienced the shortage of resources in September. The Bureau of Education estimated that the total amount of shortage was five million jin of grains and urged the Council to immediately draft a bill to improve teachers' living standards. Many school teachers received zero salary from schools, fought with school principals over the payment delay, and even collectively plead to the county government for their wages.

The economic urgency and the gentry's political resistance forced the Council to make concessions and to resolve the financial issues of schools. During the meeting of the Consultative Council on October 3, Council members insisted on persuading peasants and landlords to donate cultural grains four jin per mu. The system of donation, however, became progressive, based on the values of individuals' houses, and it specified certain groups exempt from donations. The new policy did not overhaul the original plan but did gain approval from the local elites. Four days after the meeting, Qian Taixi, Wei Youfang, and Feng Weizhou made a public announcement about the policy on Cixi Bao, Shishi Gongbao, and Ningbo Ribao for three days. Instead of making a harsh criticism, the gentry recognized the Council's effort in supporting local education and encouraged citizens to supervise the policy.

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277 "Jioayuhui Jian Canyihui Tongchou Jiaoyufei Banfa" 教育會建參議會 統籌教育費辦法 [The Bureau of Education Suggested the Method of Raising School Funding to the Consultative Council], Cixi Bao, September 24, 1946, 3.
280 Feng was the head of Huizong branch of the Feng clan. See Wang, Qiannian Wangzu, 402-404.
execution. They urged powerholders to publicize the government's budget on education and to avoid increasing peasants' economic burden. In addition, both Wei and Qian joined the Committee of Culture and Education Progress and thereby exerted greater influence on the policy enforcement. The public debate over the cultural grains policy ended with a peaceful compromise.

The gentry fought for tenants' interest but put rural teachers in a disadvantaged position. The Bureau of Education was unable to pay salaries to teachers until the Committee of Culture and Education Progress finished collecting cultural grains. On November 1 and 2, the bureau initiated the campaign of "respecting teachers and donating money" that mobilized students to ask for donations from munificent individuals. Students walked on the streets, stayed in the bus stations, and begged strangers to donate money to them. Shishi Gongbao journalists witnessed students' fear about their future and criticized the magistrate Cheng for his political incompetence. The campaign was unsuccessful in some places like Qiushu town, where teachers received an insufficient amount of donation and lingered around the county government's bureau until magistrate agreed to provide funding for their

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282 "Ci Jiaoyu Jingfei Jiejue" 慈教育經費解決 [The Problem of Cixi Educational Finance Was Resolved], Shishi Gongbao, October 20, 1946, 5.
283 "Jiejue Xiaoxue Jingfei Wenti Chengqu Fadong Jingshi" 解決小學經費問題 城區發動敬師 [To Resolve the School Funding Issue among Primary Schools, the Movement of Respecting Teachers was Unfolded in Urban Areas], Cixi Bao, November 1, 1946, 5.
284 "Ci Jiaofei Xianru Jiongjing Jue Zhankai Jingshi Xianjin" 慈教費陷入窘境 決展開敬師獻金 [The Educational Finance at Cixi Is in Dilemma, and Teachers Determine to Initiate the Campaign of Respecting Teachers and Donating Money], Shishi Gongbao, November 2, 1946, 5; "Cixi Jiaoyu Baodao" 慈谿教育報導 [The Report of Cixi Education], Shishi Gongbao, November 12, 1946, 5.
schools. Teachers were so impoverished that begging became the only means for them to sustain themselves as the subsistence level.

The post-war economic predicament resulted in a widespread demoralization among rural teachers. On November 14, a primary school teacher in Xiaozhong Town sent an article to *Shishi Gongbao* and narrated his miserable life without salary. He wrote that:

> We want to prosecute. We want to voice our opinions over the unreasonable reality. We want to voice our pain and grief. We want readers to sympathize with us... Since the campaign of respecting teachers and donating money, students are scared, and we teachers cannot teach the class. The deadline of the campaign is coming, but few people have donated money. We are willing to give up the donated money and urge the authority to pay us salaries based on the new standard!

Most teachers were concerned about their job security, and students worried that schools would be shut down one day. The Bureau of Education always found different excuses for delaying the wage payment and never actualized its promises. This writer lost his faith in the future of local education. Teachers also published their articles in other newspapers and journals and recounted their experience of humiliation. Parents did not attach significance to education and always tried to drag their children back to rural production, and even some school principals openly threatened teachers after some conflicts of educational philosophy. Teachers no longer felt that they were the forerunners of rural modernization and performed their duties perfunctorily.

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285 "Xuexiao Jingfei Wuzhao Qiushu Jiaoshi Yi Qingyuan" 學校經費無著 裘墅教師亦請願 [Without School Funding, Teachers in Qiushu Town Asked for Help], *Cixi Bao*, November 14, 1946, 3.

286 "Cixi Xiaojiao Chentong Huyu" 慈谿小教沉痛呼籲 [The Painful Voice of Cixi Primary School Teacher], *Shishi Gongbao*, November 14, 1946, 5.

287 Chen Zhongjian 陳中堅, "Xiaoxue Jiaoshi De kumen" 小學教師的苦悶 [The Pain of Primary School Teachers], *Cixi Jiaoyu* 1 (1948): 3; "Jiaoshi Taiwu Baozhang Le" 教師太無保障了 [Teachers
Educational reconstruction ended up a complete failure. The collected cultural grains were only able to sustain rural schools for one semester, and the Bureau of Education had to increase students' tuition in spring 1947.\textsuperscript{288} Plagued by the military conscription and the increasingly high inflation rate, the financial predicament of rural schools became irreversible as the Civil War heated in North China. By December 1947, the Consultative Council proposed that it should give complete autonomy for collecting cultural grains to rural communities. Council members were concerned that taxing unaffordable grains on individuals would lead to popular uprisings.\textsuperscript{289} Teachers always urged the government to increase its spending on education, but they lacked symbolic capital as the prestigious gentry had and rarely brought about changes.\textsuperscript{290} Cixi Bao journalists lamented the stagnation of educational development and satirized the gentry's opposition to the cultural grains policy.\textsuperscript{291}

\textbf{Conclusion}

While many scholars view rural societies during the post-war period as a space of political chaos, ruthless exploitation, and legal malpractice, Cixi deviates from the general impression and provides us with a lens through which to observe how local citizens actualized an effective legislation before the birth of the Republican

\textsuperscript{288} CXJYZ, 185.
\textsuperscript{289} Zhejiangsheng Cixixian Canyihui Divijie Diliuci Dahui Juexian 浙江省縣春縣參議會第一屆第六次大會決議案 [The Sixth Meeting of the First Cixi Consultative Council] (1947), 8-14.
\textsuperscript{291} "Duanping: Qiushu Jiaoshi Qingyuan" 短評: 襄墅教師請願 [Short Comments: Qiushu Teachers Asked for Help], \textit{Cixi Bao}, November 14, 1946, 3.
Constitution in December 1946.\textsuperscript{292} Members of the Consultative Council were ardent supporters of the state’s educational agenda and they formulated a policy of collecting cultural grains in response to the financial and managerial crises of schools. As the policy was ambiguous on the term “soliciting,” several "citizens" were concerned about the abuse of legislative power and initiated a public debate in the local newspapers. Although the county government supported the Council, it neither intervened in the public debate nor practiced rigorous censorship that suppressed the voices of leading dissidents. The prestige of the gentry, the social influence of local newspapers, and the local state’s laissez-faire approach to the legislative debate were of the three most important factors to explain why rural citizens succeeded in shaping public policy. It is impossible to conclude to what extent the development of legislative institutions in Cixi represented general patterns in post-war Jiangnan. As most studies have focused on Consultative Councils in major municipals and provinces, it is worthwhile to further study rural institutions in other Jiangnan localities.\textsuperscript{293}

It would be mistaken to treat this case as the rise of civil society in rural China. While many urban citizens from different social classes participated in local politics through non-state mass media, most rural citizens in Cixi engaged in social issues

\textsuperscript{292} For the legal malpractice, see Yun Xia, \textit{Down with Traitors: Justice and Nationalism in Wartime China} (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018). For the Republican Constitution, see "Zhonghua Minguo Xianfa" 中華民國憲法 [The Republican Constitution], Wikisource, last modified October 14, 2017, https://zh.wikisource.org/zh-hant/%E4%BA%8C%E7%AC%AC%E4%BA%8C%E7%AF%80_%E7%B8%A3.

\textsuperscript{293} For the study of Shanghai Consultative Council, see Ma Jun 马军, \textit{1948 Nian: Shanghai Wuchao An 1948 年: 上海舞潮案} [Year 1948: The Legal Case of Shanghai Dancing Ladies] (Shanghai: Shanghai Ancient Book Publishing House, 2005).
through formalized institutional channels. Most individuals were unable to actualize political changes through newspapers because they lacked sufficient symbolic capital that could challenge the legitimacy of political institutions. Teachers, for example, played an inactive role in the public debate because of their low social status. *Shishi Gongbao* did create a space for individuals to make political voices, and most voices had limited political impact. Finally, the practice of citizenship among rural inhabitants continued the traditional practices that were narrowly defined by the local communal interest. Most peasants organized collective action in their villages and rarely formed coalition with other major descent groups. The gentry sought to bolster the local standing of their clans and few of them invested in public schools that went beyond kinship ties. Rural inhabitants recognized the governance of the Nationalist state, but they were not interested in making commitment to the national interest.

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Conclusion

As the fighting between the Nationalist Party and the Chinese Communist Party escalated in 1947, rural reconstruction project in Cixi became increasingly gloomy. High inflation impoverished tenants and forced them to take collective action against their rent payments to landlords. Landlords also suffered from a severe contraction in commerce, and many were unable to cover their taxes.\textsuperscript{295} The shortfall in revenue resulted in the stagnation of public projects such as rural education. In 1949, only 16,799 children studied in primary schools, and this number was almost half of the number before the Second Sino-Japanese War.\textsuperscript{296} In addition, arbitrary military conscription created more space for corruption and exploitation at the town level.\textsuperscript{297} Although many rural inhabitants wrote critiques against town officials in local newspapers, most articles neither caused political changes nor put an institutional check on unlawful acts. The Cixi county government failed to establish efficient institutions in 1946, and the Civil War irreversibly aggravated their loopholes. On May 24, 1949, the People's Liberation Army entered Cixi and ended the rule of the Nationalist Regime.\textsuperscript{298}

This case study broadens our understanding of the legacy of Japanese occupation in rural China beyond economic destruction, personal trauma, and political discontinuity. The collaborationist regime failed to unify the rural society and competed with bandits and communists over territory. The regime also suffered from

\textsuperscript{295} Berhardt, \textit{Rents, Taxes, and Peasant Resistance}, 222-223.
\textsuperscript{296} CXJYZ, 47.
\textsuperscript{297} Pepper, \textit{Civil War in China}, 164.
\textsuperscript{298} CXXZ, 22.
a severe resource shortage due to the economic depression and rampant corruption. Illegal possession of properties was widespread, and collaborationists lacked resources to conduct cadastral surveys. Moreover, many peasants chose to evade taxes to improve their economic security and to minimize the cost of economic exploitation. These governance issues resulted in a bankrupted bureaucracy and forced the Nationalist government to build cost-saving institutions after the end of occupation. With poor compensation and insufficient training, many town officials evaded taxes, levied illegitimate taxes on peasants, and accounted grains chaotically. The inconsistency of fiscal policies during the Japanese occupation period also made it impossible for the Nationalist government to capture the economic situations of rural communities and determine a uniform tax rate. New governors also lacked the knowledge of the changes of property ownership, in particular the school-owned land. The government, as a result, had to take a bottom-up approach to actualize rural construction and let local communities determine their fiscal demands and raise resources for national schools. The Japanese occupation, therefore, largely shaped the institutional trajectory after September 1945.

This study also scrutinizes individual tax evasion and collective tax resistance among peasants and compels us to rethink the role of Chinese peasants in modern state building. Scholars tend to perceive them as passive victims of the Nationalist state expansion or active participants of the Communist mass mobilization.299 Cixi peasants fit in neither category and they were disruptors of the state's agenda and resourceful individuals who defined and actualized their own goals. The aim of tax

evasion was not to rebel against the state but to minimize the risk and cost of exploitation and to hedge against hyperinflation. Poverty, the loopholes in the fiscal system, mistrust of local officials, and lenient legal decisions were four determining factors in individual tax evasion. Most peasants were unwilling to cooperate with town offices because they perceived local officials as entrepreneurial individuals who lacked interest in the public welfare and exploited governmental positions to maximize their self-interest. Peasants were also uncertain how long the Nationalist unification would last, and accordingly, continued playing the strategies that they developed during the Japanese occupation period. As peasants and officials were trapped in the prisoner's dilemma, town offices became dysfunctional and struggled with tax enforcement.

While most Chinese peasant studies regard the gentry as local leaders, the patterns of collective actions in Cixi demonstrated that wealthy tenants were another source of authority in rural communities. Peasant leaders organized villagers to resist tax escalation and wrongdoing and determined the strategy of collective action. Ordinary peasants were also able to organize themselves and rescue leaders from the detention center when leaders experienced unfair treatment from the police and local officials. The social cohesion of rural villages led to the escalation of social conflicts and challenged the power structure of rural society. As the county government wanted to maintain social order and minimize the possibility of popular uprisings, it tended to make lenient legal decisions on peasants who evaded taxes. The low cost of tax evasion further motivated individuals to commit unlawful acts.
The last important factor that explained the failure of the Nationalist state in post-war Cixi was its impractical political vision. The state aimed to establish self-governments that stressed full participation of citizens in communal affairs, self-discipline, and an absolute loyalty to the state. While many rural inhabitants did engage in educational reconstruction and exercise their supervisory power over local officials, most of them were uninterested in the state's agenda. They abused the autonomy in managing school funding that the state granted to them and sought to maximize the interest of local communities. Journalists, citizens, and members of the Consultative Council debated over the boundary between the state's interest and the local society's demands. The Cixi county government failed to find a satisfactory solution to reconcile conflicting interests and ceded too much power to establish its authority among rural communities.

Overall, the patterns of institutional development and state-society relations in post-war Cixi challenge the traditional explanation of the Nationalist failure that emphasizes its political incompetence, corruption, ignorance of rural societies, and economic disasters. The local politics in Cixi shed light on the larger trends of social conflicts between town offices and villagers in post-war Jiangnan. The Nationalist state struggled with combatting corruption and exploitation of governmental bodies, but it did establish its political legitimacy by creating institutional channels for the masses to defend their interest. How the organization of peasant political mobilization in Cixi was similar or different from the social movement in other localities cannot be yet determined. It is therefore worthwhile to conduct further research on the social structure of Jiangnan villages during the post-war period to
understand the legacy of the Communist land reform. Moreover, although the public
debate over cultural grains policy showed how Cixi citizens actualized an effective
legislation, it is unclear to what extent this case study represented the patterns of
legislation practices in rural Jiangnan. How did the post-war political practices lead to
the peasant activism in the 1950s? By casting a glance back to the civil war period,
this approach may provide us with a new interpretation of the communist mass
mobilization.

The struggle of rural reconstruction in post-war Cixi echoed a political debate
between Liang Qichao and Zhang Binglin, two crucial constitutional reformers during
the late Qing period. Liang argued that the essence of constitutionalism did not lay in
institutions but in the spirit. He advocated the formation of self-government in which
local citizens made autonomous decisions without the interference of the state. Liang
believed that small governments did not conflict with the larger national unit. Zhang,
on the other hand, believed in the strength of the state and advocated the
establishment of the rule of the law. He believed that the Chinese societies suited to
centralized bureaucratic control and therefore the state must institute a rigorous
control over the bureaucracy. Community self-government would not cultivate the
spirit of constitutionalism but nurture local tranny. Zhang and Liang never realized
their ideas in the early twentieth century because of political fragmentation and
frequent warfare. The Nationalist regime sought an approach between Zhang and
Liang, as it attempted to create a collaborative space that drew strength from both the

state and society. The experiment in Cixi, unfortunately, illustrated that most rural inhabitants were uninterested in the public interest outside of their communities. On the other hand, the rule of law was never on the top of the state's agenda and the state sacrificed it for political stability and economic reconstruction.302

The Chinese Community Party ended the political debates that continued throughout the first half of the twentieth century and established the dominance of the state in public life. The campaign to suppress counterrevolutionaries stirred violence and purged Nationalist officials, bandits, and anti-Communist individuals.303 The land reform broke the strong social cohesion of rural communities and destroyed the social and material wealth of the landlords and gentry. In Cixi, around 363 local elites faced imprisonment, and around 372 elites received death sentences.304 635 landlords also experienced face-to-face struggle sessions (mianduimian dengzhou) and received verbal attacks from peasants.305 Most landlords went bankrupted after the party extracted more than half of their incomes from them.306 A small number of wealthy peasants received punishments, but most of them gained some proprieties transferred from landlords. After destroying the privileged class of the rural society, the party replaced traditional leadership with rural cadres who obeyed one single central

304 This estimation is based on the archival materials of land reform in two wards. There were seven wards in total. See CBA, 001-003-017, 001-003-018, 001-003-021.
305 CXXZ, 214.
authority and lacked the freedom to determine communal affairs.\textsuperscript{307} The central government appointed 579 cadres in 1949, and the Cixi party branch recruited activists of early political campaigns and expanded the size of local bureaucracy to 917 by 1953.\textsuperscript{308} Moreover, the new regime created a wide range of social organizations from work teams to neighborhood committees. The grassroots organizations helped the local state facilitate mass participation in political movements and exercise a firm control over peasant behavior.\textsuperscript{309}

Another contributing factor to the success of the CCP was the creation of a centralized and efficient taxation system. The Nationalist regime created three different bureaus for administering land, salt, and the "miscellaneous" local taxes, and collected commercial taxes through tax farming by contracting with merchant groups.\textsuperscript{310} The local party branch terminated tax farming practices and centralized the administration at the county Bureau of Finance.\textsuperscript{311} It also abolished town offices and reformed the system of land tax by creating direct relationships between individual owner-cultivators and the state.\textsuperscript{312} Moreover, the five-anti campaign standardized the logistics of tax enforcement and gave harsh punishments to individuals who evaded taxes.\textsuperscript{313} Lastly, the party conducted comprehensive cadastral surveys in each village and collected the information of occupation, family size and wealth, and land

\textsuperscript{309} Culp, \textit{Articulating Citizenship}, 288-289.
\textsuperscript{310} It also abolished town offices and reformed the system of land tax by creating direct relationships between individual owner-cultivators and the state.
\textsuperscript{311} CXXZ, 534-535.
\textsuperscript{312} Remick, \textit{Building Local States}, 139.
\textsuperscript{313} CXXZ, 543-544. The Five "anti" include: bribery, tax evasion, theft of state property, cheating on government contracts and stealing state economic information.
distribution. It also created maps for each village that categorized different types of
land and recorded their locations and area.\textsuperscript{314} In comparison with the Nationalist
surveys and maps that produced unstandardized, inaccurate, and sometimes arcane
information, communist knowledge was legible and transferrable and helped the local
state mobilize resources. These conditions helped the CCP complete its fiscal
transition in rural societies and mobilize resources for the Korean War.

The relation between national and private interests briefly returned to the CCP's
political discussion after the death of Mao but gradually faded away since 2013.
Chinese leaders regarded the law as a weapon to maintain social stability and to
rebuild the party's political legitimacy after the devastating Cultural Revolution. They
also recognized the significance of developing supervisory institutions to check the
rent-seeking behavior of governmental agencies during the transition towards a
market economy. By liberalizing the press and promulgating legal knowledge among
the masses, the CCP unintentionally incubated a nascent but vibrant public sphere
that was concerned about rights and power beyond the state's expectations. This early
development results in a politically contentious Internet in contemporary China. In
recent years, however, the Chinese state reestablished its control over public life by
tightening regulations on the Internet and media and repressing domestic and foreign
NGOs. It also disseminated new political ideologies such as the "core socialist
values" that stressed the party's leadership and an absolute loyalty to the state.\textsuperscript{315} The
rise of authoritarianism indicates that the political vision of civic republicanism has

\textsuperscript{314} CBA, 001-003-017, 010-004-031.
\textsuperscript{315} Ya-Wen Lei, \textit{The Contentious Public Sphere: Law, Media & Authoritarian Rule in China}
come to an end, but the historical question over the boundary between national and private interests is still in progress in contemporary China.
Character List

bao  保

canyihui  参議會
Changluo  長駱
Changshiqiao  長石橋

cichan  祠產
Cicheng  慈城
jia  甲

Cixi  慈谿
Cixi Bao  慈谿報
dan  石

Dayin  大隱
Erluishi  二六市

fabi  法幣

feng shangshan, shu shangfen  墳上山, 樹上墳

fengshui  風水
ganshi  幹事
gonggu  公穀
gongliang  公糧
gongmin  公民

Gouyu  勾餘
Guanyin  觀音
Guomu  郭姆

hanjian  漢奸

Hetou  河頭
huichan  會產

Hongtang  洪塘
Jiangzhong  江中

jianju  檢舉

jijin baoguan weiyuanhui  基金保管委員會
jin  斤

jingchang men  經常門
junfa chu  軍法處
jun liang  軍糧

li  里

Linghan  靈漢
linshi men  临时门

Luotuoqiao  駱駝橋

mianduimian douzheng  面对面斗争
mu  兀

110
Ningbo Ribao 宁波日报
pinggou shiliang 平購食糧
qianzhuang 錢莊
qingguan dao 清觀道
qu 區
quanmu 勸募
qingsuan weiyuanhui 清算委員會
Qiushu 襄墅
renxue 壬戌
Shiqiao 師橋
Shishi Gongbao 時事公報
shiwu yuan 事務員
Shushan 蜀山
sifa chu 司法處
siming 四明
siwen 斯文
wenhua jiaoyu xiejin weiyuanhui 文化教育協進委員會
wenhua gu 文化穀
weilao jingfei 慰勞經費
wuwan mu xuetian yundong 五萬畝學田運動
xiang gongsuo 鄉公所
Xiaozhong 孝中
xin xianzhi 新縣制
xingzheng buzhu gu 行政補助穀
xuetian 學田
yamen 衙門
Yangpu 洋浦
Yangshu 洋墅
yi 義
ying'an 淫庵
yingbian gu 應變穀
yingshen saihui 迎神賽會
Yunhu 雲湖
ziwei jingfei gu 自衛經費穀
Zhangting 丈亭
Zhejiang gaodeng xuetang 浙江高等學堂
zhengfu 政府
zhongxin guomin xuexiao 中心國民學校
zhidao yuan 指導員
Zhuangqiao 莊橋
Zhujiang 竹江
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