Communal cooperative institutions and peasant revolutions in South China, 1926–1934

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Peasant revolutions in the twentieth century played a major role in shaping the course of world history. Peasants, identified by Marx as a species facing extinction in the face of rapid industrialization, in fact became one of the primary forces of social change in this century. This research reflects the recent trends in scholarship on revolutions. Through the comparative-historical method, it seeks to explain very different patterns of peasant revolutionary behavior in two revolutions in South China between 1926 and 1934. In the case of Hunan, peasants staged a radical revolution without significant outside mobilization. In the case of Jiangxi, peasants remained politically passive even under very intense mobilization from Mao Tse-tung's Red Army. Following the recent movement away from materialistic and instrumentalist perspectives, which tend to emphasize factors such as economic systems, class relations, and rational choice, this research argues that the cause of different revolutionary patterns in Hunan and Jiangxi lies in the legitimacy of organizational structures of rural communities. Agrarian revolutions could happen when peasants attempt to overthrow the illegitimate communal organizational frameworks.

Historically, many peasant communities were governed by powerful cooperative institutions. However, different origins of community cooperation – voluntary cooperation by peasants and imposed cooperation by lords – had profound impacts on communal organizational factors such as ideologies, control mechanisms, decision-making, and elites, as well as interest distribution. This research argues that agrarian revolutions can be caused by peasants' attempts to restructure unfair and illegitimate community organizational phenomena.

There are several trends in recent scholarship on revolutions. The first is the movement away from building a general theory of revolution.[1]

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Scholars now recognize that there are not only many forms of revolutions but also multiple and different causes. As Goodwin writes, the new approach assumes

> not only that many phenomena that we wish to explain, including revolutions or types of revolutions, have multiple, complex determinants, but also that these phenomena may have very *different* complexes of determinants. This approach does *not* assume, in other words, that all revolutions or types of revolutions will have precisely the same causes, there may be multiple paths, so to speak, to the same destination.[2]

Charles Tilly also argues against efforts to build a general theory of revolution. As he observes, "After two centuries in which singular models of revolution have prevailed, today's theorists are finally recognizing that revolution is not a singular phenomenon, could not in principle be a singular phenomenon."[3] Therefore, he congratulates the abandoning of "the time-honored search for a single, invariant model of revolution applicable across wide expanses of time and space."[4]

The second trend in recent scholarship on revolution is the emphasis on explaining differences among revolutions. As argued by Tilly, if a general theory of revolution is unobtainable, a more useful intellectual exercise should seek to "examine and explain variability" among revolutions.[5] Or as Skocpol puts it in a recent review, efforts should be made to study the "varying fates of revolutionary movements."[6] Specifically, she calls for studies that compare cases where actual revolutions happened to cases where revolutionary movements made only partial headway, and to cases where revolutionary movements might have flourished, but in fact did not.[7]

The third trend is the increasing use of what Skocpol terms "macro-analytic comparative-historical social science."[8] Compared to previous generations of study of revolutions, this method is much more grounded in history and seeks to generate hypotheses through comparisons across cases. An often used method is to compare regional variations within a single national context to examine, for example, why some revolutions received popular support while others did not.

The fourth trend is the increasing emphasis on the independent role of culture. In their analytical modes, earlier generations of scholarship tend to be materialistic (such as the Marxist approach) or instrumentalist (such as the rational choice approach). However, as Foran observes, it is of crucial importance to understand how culture, in its range of

meanings from collectively shared values to explicit ideologies, becomes effective in the causation, course, and outcomes of revolutions.[9] Goodwin also argues that analysis of revolutions must "include actors' shared beliefs and assumptions, collective identities, and normative commitments."[10]

Both Foran and Goodwin point out that materialistic and instrumentalist views of social action fail to grasp the sometimes crucial affectual or emotional aspects of revolutionary movements. As both quoted from Teodor Shanin,

> Social scientists often miss a centre-piece of any revolutionary struggle – the fervour and anger that drives revolutionaries and makes them into what they are. Academic training and bourgeois convention deaden its appreciation.... At the very centre of revolution lies an emotional upheaval or moral indignation, revulsion and fury with the power-that-be, such that one cannot demure or remain silent, whatever the cost.[11]

This emphasis on culture brings out the role of legitimacy in the cause of revolutions. The sense of wrongs and injustice according to moral principles propels many to attempt to overthrow the current political and socioeconomic orders, whatever the cost. The legitimacy factor challenges the view that only materialistic calculations determine the choices of social actions.

Wickham-Crowley's recent works, which received high praises from Goodwin, Foran, and Skocpol, represent all of the above trends. His research uses the comparative-historical method to explain the varying outcomes of revolutionary movements in Latin-America.[12] The study of peasant revolutionary behaviors occupies an important part in his analysis. He argues that peasant rebellion is a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for successful revolutions. He criticizes previous scholarship for focusing too much on mobilization from outside revolutionary organizations, and not enough on peasants and their communities. This view assumes that peasants are there to be mobilized and the same mobilization efforts would achieve the same degree of success by outside revolutionary organizations.[13] Although his explanations of varying outcomes among Latin American revolutionary movements are very complex and nuanced, he emphasizes the roles of legitimacy.

Wickham-Crowley points out that the decline of legitimacy of the present political and socioeconomic orders is very important in deter-

mining the decisions of peasants to support revolutionary movements.[14] The decline of legitimacy can be the result of either failure of governors (landlords/government) to fulfill the social contracts or peasants' sense of being damaged by landlords or government actions, such as restricting peasants' access to lands. According to him, it is important to "introduce some notion of 'damage' if we are to comprehend and distinguish fully those situations in which peasants rise up against their enemies, and those rather different situations where cultivators are content just to continue tilling the soil."[15]

Therefore, in analyzing peasant decisions to support guerrilla movements, Wickham-Crowley emphasizes that we must understand "the sense of moral outrage involved in the decision," which Olson's rational choice theory "is utterly incapable of grasping."[16] For example, Wickham-Crowley's research found that widespread terror by the governments against peasants, which was designed to raise the cost of supporting guerrilla movements, usually made peasants more angry and generated more recruits for revolutions.

This research reflects these recent trends in scholarship on revolutions. Through a comparative-historical study, it examines very different patterns of peasant revolutionary behavior in two revolutions in South China between 1926–1934. It argues that the cause of different revolutionary patterns in Hunan and Jiangxi lies in the legitimacy of organizational structures of their rural communities. The first section of the article presents an organizational approach to the study of peasant revolutions. The next section compares and contrasts peasant revolutions in Hunan and Jiangxi between 1926 and 1934. The section that follows compares the communal organizational frameworks in rural Hunan and Jiangxi. The next section explains how rural organizational differences caused different revolutionary behaviors between Hunan and Jiangxi peasants. The final section provides the conclusion. It draws some observations about the study of Chinese revolution specifically and the study of agrarian revolutions in general.

An organizational approach

This article proposes an organizational approach to the study of agrarian revolutions. It examines how the different ways rural communities organized to respond to environmental challenges contributed to agrarian revolutions. It is based on the fact that all human social

units require formal organizations to coordinate and control collective actions. As Potter and Diaz point out, "Although it may be that the peasant family is the most self-sufficient small unit formed in any society, it cannot exist as a social isolate. Peasants must be able to call upon members of other families for mutual economic, social, and emotional help."[17] For this reason, agrarian communities must establish institutions to organize themselves into collectivities that are capable of performing functions that individual families cannot.

According to Hechter, cooperative institutions arise to facilitate the provision of joint goods that cannot be produced by individual efforts. As he notes:

> The demand for cooperative institutions arises from individuals' desires to consume jointly-produced goods that cannot be obtained by following individual strategies. Cooperative institutions are generally formed to take advantage of positive externalities, such as increasing returns to scale, risk-sharing, and cost-sharing. The demand for joint goods is heightened by contextual events like wars, invasions, epidemics, and natural disasters, as well as by endogenous processes like rapid demographic growth.[18]

Formal organization is an important component of social institutions that perform cooperative functions. As Meyer and Rowan observe, formal organization emerges because "rational formal structures are assumed to be the most effective way to coordinate and control the complex relational networks" in social life and production.[19] Agrarian communities have strong imperatives to adopt formal organizations. Activities such as survival, production, irrigation, and defense all involve extensive relational work and thus require that a community is able to coordinate and control collective actions. As Magagna concludes, "In agrarian societies the key existential problem is how to organize the production and distribution of the means of subsistence, and we can interpret community institutions as the core organizational framework in which that problem is managed across time and space."[20]

However, even though environmental imperatives require community cooperation, the creation of cooperative institutions, or the community organizational framework, is not an automatic process. This is because any joint goods provided by cooperative institutions are also public goods available to every member of a community. The logic of collective action means that the provision of public goods is notoriously problematic.

Nontheless, cooperative institutions did emerge in many peasant communities historically. Hechter identifies two basic sources for the creation of cooperative institutions: "On the one hand, institutions can be imposed upon a given population by some conqueror or overlord.... On the other hand, individuals with roughly equal power can create institutions voluntarily, in effect binding themselves to a joint project."[21] Hechter calls the second source a "contractarian process."

Cooperative institutions can be imposed either by conquest or an overlord. Conquerors often brought to the new land some cooperative social and economic institutions that they had practiced before. Through the use of coercion and superior resources, outside conquerors could impose a foreign social and economic cooperative practice upon the native communities. Such was the imposition of community ownership of land by the Spanish conqueror upon native Indian communities in central America. The colonial government initiated large-scale resettlements of Indians after severe decline in the native population and gave newly created Indian communities rights to land as a group.[22] This imposition of land rights facilitated the development of strong corporate communities in central America.

Cooperative institutions can also be imposed by an overlord. Some historians have argued that in England the adoption of the common-field system was facilitated by strong lords. Reynolds observes that common-field systems were most likely to be established in places where there had already been "institutions through which to make and enforce agricultural regulations." In England, the lords' courts often served the purpose. As Reynolds notes, "it has been argued that strong lordship and an unfree peasantry were preconditions of a 'farming community' with regulated open fields."[23] As Magagna observes, power hierarchy in communities is conductive to the enforcement of rules and norms of cooperation. Thus, "institutional inequality can be a source of cohesion and solidarity" within the community by promoting cooperative institutions.[24]

Cooperative institutions can also be created through voluntary cooperation. Social scientists have advanced three explanations of the possibility of voluntary cooperation in peasant communities. The first is the repeated game explanation. Although it is rational for players in a Prisoner's Dilemma situation to defect rather than cooperate with each other, as Axelrod shows, if the game is a larger iterated game, the individual player knows that its repeated nature would provide each

person with a tit-for-tat strategy and therefore cooperation becomes rational for them.[25]

The second perspective to explain voluntary cooperation emphasizes organizational control designed to eliminate the free-rider problem. Since the major obstacle to cooperation is the public goods problem, one way to promote cooperation is to make the goods produced by cooperation become private goods. Only those who contribute can enjoy the benefits generated by cooperative works. A community has to design explicit organizational control mechanisms to monitor who is contributing and to exclude free-riders. Michael Hechter calls this the solidaristic approach.[26]

The third perspective on voluntary cooperation in peasant communities, provided by Michael Taylor, approaches the problem of cooperation through the concept of "community." He defines a community as one (1) whose members have beliefs and values in common; (2) where relations among members are direct and many-sided; (3) whose members practice generalized as well as balanced reciprocity. Using social order as an example, Taylor argues that this public good can be provided by voluntary cooperation of community members in the absence of state or other forms of power hierarchy. A community can, because of its features, effectively utilize sanctions against those members who refuse to cooperate or those who want to free-ride. Because community members practice balanced reciprocity and because their relationships are many-sided, a non-cooperative act would be retaliated by withdrawal of reciprocal aid, ostracism, public ridicule and shaming, or even expulsion from the community.[27] Taylor argues that communal sanctions for non-cooperation were especially pertinent in corporate peasant communities characterized by many-sided relationships and balanced reciprocity among members.

I argue that both imposed and voluntary cooperation in peasant communities have important organizational consequences. I specifically argue that communal organizational principles can vary along four dimensions: organizational ideology, organizational control, decision-making and source of elites, and redistributive mechanisms.

a. Organizational ideology is the shared perceptions of community members about the nature of their mutual relationships. Communities organized by voluntary cooperative institutions tend to promote an ideology of common group identity to increase organizational cohesion

in the absence of force. Specifically, communities would try to create a strong consciousness of "us" among members as against "others" outside the community. They often develop extensive rituals to reinforce group consciousness among members. As Magagna observes, they used "community ritual as a focus of community solidarity." These rituals "drew boundaries between insiders and outsiders" and "focused the consciousness of participants" on their group solidarity.[28]

In contrast to the organizational attempt to create an ideology of shared group identity and interest, communities organized by imposed institutions did not seek to promote a similar ideology. This was because these communities could survive organizationally without perceived shared identity and interest among members. Their cooperative institutions were created and maintained through coercive power.

b. Organizational control refers to the efforts by organizations to make their members follow the rules and norms of organizations so as to maintain their proper functioning. In formal cooperative institutions, the goal of control is to maintain on-going cooperation among members. Organizations practice a variety of measures to ensure compliance with rules and norms by members.[29]

For peasant communities organized by voluntary cooperative institutions, control by coercion is minimal. Instead, they have to rely on normative and remunerative powers to ensure compliance from members. The normative powers are achieved mainly through rituals that celebrate group belonging and seek to strengthen personal identification with the organization to make compliance with rules automatic and voluntary. Communities that use voluntary cooperative institutions also practice remunerative power. This is achieved by the special rights and privileges granted only to members.

In contrast, organizational control in communities with imposed cooperation relies primarily on coercion. The lords or external power authority used political and even military powers to coordinate and enforce community cooperation. Very often the community organizational framework operated an internal police system to ensure rule compliance.

c. Decision-making and sources of elites also differ in communities organized by voluntary and imposed cooperative institutions. Voluntary cooperative institutions, lacking differentiation of power in their incep-

tion, had to rely on consensus and some kind of democratic procedure in decision-making. Their elites were selected either by merit or election.

In contrast, in communities with enforced cooperation, decision-making was entirely an elite dominated and controlled process. Power was exercised by the lords or external authority. Decisions reflected only the interests and wishes of those who controlled the community. Ordinary community members were excluded from any meaningful participation in managing their community affairs.

d. The last organizational principle in which we can find significant variations concerns community redistributive mechanisms. Communities based on voluntary cooperative institutions tend to practice leveling to minimize differences among members in order to consolidate community cohesion. Leveling may take the form of direct transfer of wealth through division of corporate property and community welfare systems.

In contrast to the leveling practices of communities based on voluntary cooperative institutions, redistribution mechanisms in communities with imposed cooperative institutions operate to concentrate wealth within communities. These communities, because they were organized through coercive force, do not see social and economic differences among members as a threat to organizational cohesion. Instead, the elites, who usually possess dictatorial powers in these communities, would likely abuse their power to increase their own wealth through exploiting the rest of the community. They would use the coercive power of the cooperative institution to extract wealth from the community.

Different communal organizational principles define how peasants can influence their own community affairs through communal organizations and how they can benefit from these organizations. I argue that communal organizations following different organizational principles enjoy different legitimacy among peasants. The central hypothesis of this research argues that communal organizational frameworks enjoy different legitimacy among peasants. It is illegitimate communal organizations that create dynamics for community-level social-political change. Agrarian revolutions arise when peasants attempt to overthrow illegitimate community organizational frameworks and establish new rules and institutions for community cooperation.

Contrasting peasant revolutions in Hunan and Jiangxi

Peasant collective actions in both cases qualified as revolutions, because they all involved goals with national consequences, such as anti-imperialism and anti-warlordism, and were closely connected to national revolutionary political movements, such as the KMT and the Communist Party. Revolutions in Hunan and Jiangxi were what Huntington called the Eastern model of revolution, which relied on peasant mobilization and involved lengthy revolutionary struggles.[30] The great Chinese revolution of the twentieth century essentially pioneered this model and later profoundly influenced the strategies and tactics of revolutions in Southeast Asia, Cuba, and Nicaragua. Revolutions in Hunan and Jiangxi constituted important parts of the social revolutionary process in China. The effort by Huntington to differentiate different types of revolutions is consistent with the recent scholarship that recognizes that revolution is not and could not be a singular phenomenon.

This research studies an interesting puzzle presented by the revolution in Hunan (1926–1927) and the revolution in neighboring Jiangxi (1929–1934). Important socioeconomic conditions in the two provinces, such as the class composition of rural populations, land holding and distribution, and level of exploitation, were strikingly similar. Table 1 documents similar proportions of peasants who owned their own lands (owner-cultivator), and who had to rent lands entirely (tenants) or partially (owner-tenants) in Hunan and Jiangxi.[31]

Table 2 shows similar pre-revolutionary rent rates and thus similar relative levels of exploitation in these provinces. The data for Hunan are from three eastern counties, the most violent area during the Hunan revolution. The data for Jiangxi are from three southern counties that constituted the core of the communist revolution in Jiangxi.[32]

Table 1. Peasant composition in Hunan and Jiangxi

	Counties surveyed		Tenants %		Owner-tenants %		Owner-cultivator %	
	1911	1931	1911	1931	1911	1931	1911	1931
Jiangxi	22	23	41	46	30	30	29	24
Hunan	29	31	48	47	23	25	29	28

Table 2. Comparison of rent rates in Hunan and Jiangxi

Hunan:	Counties	Rent rate	Jiangxi:	Counties	Rent rate
	Liuyang	60%		Guangchang	50%
	Pingjiang	54%		Shicheng	60%
	Liling	55%		Ningdu	63%

Puzzlingly, although outside mobilization from the Chinese Communist Party was largely absent in Hunan, the peasant revolution there was nonetheless radical. In Jiangxi, however, despite intense efforts at mobilization by the CCP, peasant behaviors in the revolution remained conservative. Why, under very similar socioeconomic conditions, did two peasant societies display different revolutionary patterns when the levels of involvement by outside revolutionary organizations should have produced the opposite outcome?

As Ronald Waterbury observes, in exploring the causes of peasant revolutions it is as important to understand why some peasants are *not* revolutionary as why some are revolutionary. It is important to understand why some peasants "fought and died for change," while others "remained passive or joined the fight to defend the *status quo*." By analyzing "the reactionary, or at best neutral," role of some peasants "in comparison with the fervent revolutionary role" of other peasants, "we might be able to better understand the conditions under which peasants will or will not make the revolution."[33]

This article proposes the following four criteria to compare the intensity of agrarian revolutions. *Scope of peasant participation:* This can be measured by peasants' participation in various kinds of revolutionary organizations such as peasant associations and revolutionary armies. A revolution that attracts the spontaneous participation of a large portion of a peasant society is a strong revolution while one that only involves a small portion of the society is a weak revolution.

Source of revolutionary dynamics: This measures whether a revolution emerges largely by itself from peasant communities or is created by external mobilization. A self-derived revolution is likely to be a strong one since it is self-sustaining. If a revolution is mobilized by outside political forces, it is a weaker revolution since without outside mobilization it may quickly lose momentum.

Local revolutionary leadership: This measures whether rural lower classes can effectively assume leadership in local revolutionary processes. Outside revolutionary organizations often control high level leadership positions. Local level leadership, however, is crucial because it effectively determines the direction and intensity of the local revolutionary process.

Revolutionary outcomes: This measures whether a peasant revolution can transform rural social, economic, and political structures. Strong revolutions are typified by deadly class struggles and comprehensive socioeconomic programs. Since the land problem often occupies a central place in peasants' struggles, a key measure is whether peasants in a revolution seek to restructure the land relationship through a land revolution.

The Hunan peasant revolution, 1926–1927

China was in a constant state of crisis after the 1911 revolution that overthrew the Qing Dynasty. The republic that replaced the monarchy lacked institutions to control the country effectively. After the death of Yuan Shikai in 1916, the most powerful military strongman at the time, China descended into a chaotic era of warlord politics. From 1920 to 1926, Hunan was ruled by the warlord Zhao Hengti. He constantly warred with warlords from other provinces and with his competitors within Hunan. The wars were ruinous for Hunan, creating a chronic fiscal crisis for the military government, which in turn intensified its exploitation of the Hunan peasant economy.

In this context, the Hunan peasant movement began to emerge. The first organized peasant movement appeared in the Yuebei area of Hengshan County in 1923. However, it was quickly suppressed by Zhao with brutal force. In 1925, Mao Tse-tung personally organized several peasant associations in his home town of Shao Shan in Xiangtan County. They were again quickly put down by Zhao Hengti and Mao fled to the neighboring province of Guangdong. After these events, the peasant movement in Hunan went underground.

After July 1926, however, the peasant movement in Hunan entered a new stage. In May of that year, the new ruler of Hunan and a progressive military leader Tang Shengzhi came under attack from warlord Wu Peifu who then controlled one of the largest warlord armies in China. He attacked Hunan because the revolutionary coalition of the

CCP and the KMT had already built a power base in Guangdong Province to the south of Hunan and had been actively preparing for a northern expedition to wipe out the warlords and to unify China again. Wu feared that under the rule of Tang Shengzhi, Hunan could be used as a springboard for the Guangdong revolutionary coalition.

Forced to retreat into southern Hunan, Tang requested military support from the KMT-CCP revolutionary coalition in Guangdong. With this sudden change in the political situation, the Guangdong revolutionary coalition decided to launch its long planned northern expedition immediately. In July 1926, the National Revolutionary Army launched offensives against Wu Peifu's forces in Hunan. Wu's army was quickly defeated and the CCP-KMT coalition took the Hunan capital Changsha in the same month.

The new Hunan government under the control of the CCP-KMT coalition created a vast political space for Hunan peasants. The new KMT-CCP provincial government sponsored the creation of the Hunan Provincial Peasant Association to coordinate and guide peasant movements at the lower levels. The peasant movement spread like wild fire across Hunan.

In July 1926, peasant associations in Hunan had a membership of about 200,000. By November, this figure jumped to 1,367,727. By January 1927, peasant associations had been established in 57 of the 77 counties of Hunan and they together claimed a membership of about 2,000,000. The final count in June 1927 by the Ministry of Peasant Affairs of KMT government put the figure at 4,517,140.[34]

Although the social and economic programs of early peasant associations from 1923 to 1925 were limited, the peasant movement after July 1926 entered a qualitatively new stage. A great peasant revolution swept the countryside. Mao Tse-tung's "An Investigation Report on the Hunan Peasant Movement" is still regarded as the most authoritative empirical study of this revolution.[35] His field research vividly describes the great revolution in the countryside that destroyed the old rural social and political structures. The revolutionary behaviors of Hunan peasants were very radical measured by the four criteria.

a. The scope of peasant participation in Hunan was tremendous by any standards. According to the statistics from the Ministry of Peasant Affairs in June 1927, Hunan peasant associations claimed a member-

ship of 4,517,140. As Mao recorded in his report, usually only the head of a family formally signed up as a member of a peasant association.[36] Historians place the real number of peasants involved with the revolution at around 10 million. According to the 1917 census by Hunan provincial government, the population then was 31,088,024.[37] By this figure, almost one third of Hunan's population was involved in one way or another in the revolutionary process.

According to Mao, in some middle plain counties such as Xiangtan, Xiangxiang, and Hengshan, almost every peasant was organized by peasant associations. In other middle plain counties such as Yiyang and Huarong, most peasants were organized. Although many counties in the hilly western Hunan were under-organized, the middle plain counties were the population and agriculture center of the province.

b. Judged by the source of revolutionary dynamics, Hunan had a radical peasant revolution. Although outside revolutionary organizations facilitated the emergence of the Hunan peasant movement by creating a large political space, they were not directly responsible for the vast expansion of the peasant movement after 1926. The KMT-CCP coalition at this time lacked the necessary infrastructures to penetrate into the vast countryside and effectively organize peasants. Many declassified CCP documents show the apprehension of CCP leaders over the lack of party control over the peasant revolution. For example, a CCP directive in July 1927 complained:

> Although in many places there are hundreds of thousands of peasants participating in the peasant revolution, in most cases there are only a few comrades involved with them.... Although there exist party organizations in some places, they either cannot penetrate into the mass (they all stop at the district level and not down to the *xiang* level), or they merely exist in name but cannot function.[38] (note: in Hunan *xiang* was the administrative level between districts and villages)

c. Judged by whether lower rural classes could effectively lead the local revolutionary process, Hunan again demonstrated qualities of a radical rural revolution. Whether lower classes have the political consciousness to lead their own revolutions is crucial because each revolution is composed of countless local struggles that decide the outcome of the revolution. Fundamental changes can occur only when the lower level revolutionary process is radical. This was what happened in Hunan. According to Mao:

> In the countryside only one force has always put up the bitterest fight and that is the poor peasants. Throughout both the period of underground organization and that of open organization, the poor peasants have fought militantly. They are the deadliest enemies of the local bullies and bad gentry and attack their strongholds without the slightest hesitation.[39]

Most importantly, this leading role by poor peasants was also reflected in their conscious efforts to control local revolutionary organizations. As Mao reported, "Being the most revolutionary, poor peasants have won the leadership in peasant associations. Almost all the posts of Chairman and committee members in the peasant associations at the lowest level (the *xiang* level) were held by poor peasants."[40]

d. Hunan peasant revolution was also radical judged by its revolutionary outcomes. With regard to the political order, Mao's report and many other accounts depicted fundamental transformations. Peasant associations in fact established a political hegemony, while the powers of the landed class and the old rural governmental structures were totally smashed. The economic struggle in many places, however, was largely confined to rent reduction. Did this imply that Hunan peasants were conservative? The answer is "No."

The absence of more radical economic changes resulted from the conservative policies of outside revolutionary organizations. The KMT's officers were mostly drawn from small and middle-sized landlord families, and many of the high level KMT officers used to be warlords who joined the revolutionary camp because of personal calculations. Therefore, the KMT could not initiate or support truly revolutionary land policies. The CCP, politically very weak at the time compared with the KMT, adopted a policy of moderating its policies in order to keep the KMT in the "united front."

As a result, until the end of 1926 both parties' economic programs were very conservative. The resolution by the CCP on peasant movements in September 1926 merely limited rents to no more than 50 percent of production. The resolution by the KMT on peasant movements in October required a 25 percent rent reduction.[41] Neither resolutions mentioned the land issue.

Although the conservative policies of the KMT and the CCP constrained peasants' economic struggles, not all refrained from restructuring the land relationship. After March of 1927, in many places Hunan peasants, under the leadership of lower-level peasant associations, took the ini-

tiative to settle the land problem by confiscating and redistributing lands of the landlord class.[42]

These spontaneous actions were best recorded in the CCP's inner party documents. CCP leaders were extremely frightened because these actions threatened its alliance with the KMT. The party center asked its organizations at every level to try to stop the spontaneous peasants' land revolution. As a central party directive of June 1, 1927 stated, "We must remember, our party's peasant policy is resolutely to stop excesses in actions against small landlords and revolutionary militarymen."[43] For Hunan peasants in some places had already confiscated lands of small landlords, which, unlike the lands of big landlords, were formally protected by the KMT and the CCP. Peasants even confiscated lands of KMT officers who were officially in the revolutionary camp. A June 14 CCP directive stated, "Peasants solving the land problem in an unorganized way have already caused countless overactions. These excesses in actions must be corrected."[44] A May 25, 1927 CCP resolution demanded that lands confiscated from KMT officers' families be returned immediately.[45]

In summary, measured by any criteria, the Hunan peasant revolution was a radical rural revolution. Hunan peasants seized the favorable political space created by outside political forces to generate a great social transformation. The tremendous scope of involvement and the radical social and political changes underlined this great rural revolution. The lower classes not only were the main force of the revolution but also actively led the revolutionary process at local levels. The actions of Hunan peasants (e.g., in land revolution) often far exceeded what the CCP and the KMT could allow.

The Jiangxi peasant revolution, 1929–1934

The Jiangxi revolution was the center of the so-called Second Revolutionary Civil War, from the collapse of the KMT-CCP alliance in August 1927 until 1937 when the two parties formed a united national front in the face of the Japanese invasion. Spatially, the Jiangxi revolution was restricted to the border region of southwestern Jiangxi and part of western Fujian province. Since Jiangxi later became the seat of the Party center, the Jiangxi region was officially called "the Central Revolutionary Base Area."

The origin of the Jiangxi revolution was related to the Hunan peasant revolution. The radical and violent revolutionary actions of Hunan peasants frightened KMT leaders who wanted at most a nationalistic, not a social revolution. Many military coups and attacks by KMT forces resulted from April to July 1927. The CCP was forced to turn openly to an armed revolution. In response to the KMT, the CCP organized a major military uprising of troops under its influence in Nanchang, the capital of Jiangxi on August 1, 1927. This marks the beginning of the decades long civil war between the KMT and the CCP.

From October 1927 to January 1928, the CCP also organized a series of rural uprisings in the southwestern Jiangxi counties of Jian, Wanan, Yongfeng, Ganxian, Yudu, Xunwu, and Xingguo. At about the same time, in western Fujian rural uprisings were organized in the counties of Pinghe, Longyan, Yongding, and Shanghang. The result was a few very small and semi-secret revolutionary base areas in the two regions.[46] However, they provided some necessary links between local peasant communities and Mao Ze-dong's Red Fourth Army, which entered the region in early 1929.

Mao's Red Fourth Army originated from the Autumn Harvest Uprising that he organized in Hunan during September 1927. After his ragtag peasant force was quickly defeated by KMT troops, Mao led his forces in retreat to the southern border region of Hunan and Jiangxi and established a base area in the Jinggang Mountain. However, the poor mountain areas of the base could not support 10,000 troops. Food and clothing were scarce. Moreover, by the end of 1928, Hunan reactionary forces were planning a new suppression campaign with 24 regiments. Facing these military and logistical threats, Mao and his comrades in January 1929 decided to abandon the Jinggang Mountain base area and redeploy the Red Fourth Army to the border region of southwestern Jiangxi and western Fujian.

The arrival of Mao's Red Army in the region created a new environment for the local rural revolution. In August, 1930, Mao's forces merged with another Red Army coming to the region and they together established the Red First Front Army with Mao as the general commissar and Zhu De as the commander. The Red First Front Army now had about 40,000 soldiers and successfully defeated three suppression campaigns by KMT forces from the end of 1930 to September 1931. Mao's Red Army controlled a base area in southwestern Jiangxi and western Fujian that included 21 counties and a population of 2.5 million. Thus

situated, Mao established the Chinese Soviet Republic in November 1931. Mao was the Chairman of its provisional government and its capital was located at Ruijin County.

Many studies of the Jiangxi period argue that the region under the Soviet Republic experienced a highly radical rural revolution. For example, Ilpyong J. Kim argues that during the Jiangxi period the CCP operated an effective political mobilization system. CCP mobilization aroused the class consciousness and a sense of participation on the part of peasants, who vigorously undertook a radical revolution.[47] However, new sources clearly show that conservative peasant behaviors continuously frustrated the CCP.

a. Judged by the sources of dynamics of the revolution, the Jiangxi revolution qualifies as a weak agrarian revolution. The dynamics of the Jiangxi revolution came from outside political forces, primarily the Red Army and the Leninist party-state machinery of the CCP.

A letter from the Party center to the Fujian Provincial Party Committee revealed that the revolution in western Fujian depended on the Red Army:

> In every struggle it is the Red Army that assumes the major role, rather than a facilitative force, behind the expansion of mass struggles – We must let the mass realize that they themselves are the main force of the struggle. Red Army is only military reinforcement. We must not let the mass develop the habit of relying on the Red Army.[48]

As observed by a CCP report, local party organizations did not "change their opportunistic attitude of relying on the Red Army and waiting for the Red Army." In southern Jiangxi "except in a few districts in Wantai, Xingguo, and Shengli counties where it was the mass struggles and mass uprisings that created revolutions, in all other places it was the Red Army that created the revolution and established soviet areas."[49]

The warlord phenomenon at the time allowed Mao and his Red Army to thrive in isolated and hilly southern Jiangxi. Once the hegemonic position of the Red Army was established, the CCP and the Chinese Soviet Republic, founded in November 1931, translated this into a political hegemony through the Leninist party-state machinery. The Jiangxi peasants did not create the Chinese Soviet Republic. Rather, the hegemonic Red Army and the institutions of the Soviet Republic created a peasant revolutionary situation.

b. The Jiangxi revolution was also conservative as judged by participation of peasants in the revolutionary process. Since the Jiangxi revolution was created by the military hegemony of the Red Army, it was the most crucial revolutionary organ of the time and the revolution depended on the Red Army's continuous expansion. Thus, peasants' participation in the revolution could be measured by their attitudes to the Red Army.

Many materials also showed the great reluctance of Jiangxi and Fujian peasants to join the Red Army. An August 8, 1933 article in *Dou Zheng*, the official publication of the Soviet central organs, revealed that coercion and even deception were the main methods through which peasants were recruited into the Red Army. One method used in Huichang County was to call a mass meeting and after everyone arrived all doors were locked. All peasants present had to join the army and the meeting would not end until everyone joined. In Ruijin County, if someone did not join the army then his house would be locked by the soviet. In Yundu County, the soviet officials simply copied names of the those between 16 and 45 years old from the census registration book. Those whose names were copied had to join the army. In Shengli County, labor unions announced that if a worker did not join the army his land from the revolution would be confiscated. Cheating and material inducements were also used. In Huichang County it was announced that if one wanted to get good land he must join the army. In other counties, a saying advised: "To eat meat, join the Workers' Division."[50]

The problem of a low participation was not only restricted to peasants. Even CCP party members did not want to join the Red Army. As a 1932 Jiangxi party document stated:

> Party members' unwillingness to join the Red Army, except in a few counties, became a general phenomenon.... It even happened that when party members in Wantai and Yundu counties heard that they should take the lead in joining the Red Army, they would prefer to quit the party.[51]

The large number of desertions from the Red Army could also demonstrate the low participation by Jiangxi peasants. A 1932 CCP summary of the expansion of Red Army revealed that in Huichang County there were 300 deserters in July alone. In Chanting County, only 2 of the 57 recruits reached the troops with the rest deserting along the way.[52] A CCP work guideline of the Fujian Party Committee in October 1933 revealed that of a 1,000 men regiment recruited from Ninghua County

only 200 remained, while a battalion from Sidu County had 200 deserters.[53] Peasant desertion from the Red Army was so severe that in many units deserters outnumbered new recruits. A work summary of the Third Corp of the Red Army mentioned that in one month the corp had 76 new recruits while 83 deserted.[54] To control the rampant desertions, the Red Army created a special anti-desertion unit. A so-called Anti-Desertion Ten Men Group was created in every company. Thus, almost 10 percent of a company's man power was spent policing the rest of the company. These special units had the right to arrest anyone who deserted or tried to desert.[55]

c. The Jiangxi revolution was also conservative as judged by the leadership of local revolutionary organizations. For a long time, local leadership was controlled either by the rural upper classes of landlords and rich peasants or by the lumpenproletariat. Many documents show this widespread problem in the base regions of the Jiangxi revolution.

In October 1930, Mao Tse-tung did an investigation in Xingguo County, concentrating on the Yongfeng district. He found that its district soviet was almost completely in the hands of rich peasants and lumpenproletariat. Mao was struck that of the 18 members of the district soviet, not a single poor peasant or agricultural laborer was included.[56]

Many other sources show that this situation was widespread in southwestern Jiangxi and western Fujian. A resolution by the Western Fujian CCP Congress in July 1929 expressed concern that some revolutionary committees at the county level were controlled by the lumpenproletariat and even by landlords.[57] A report to the Party center on the situation in southwestern Jiangxi also complained that many local-level party leadership positions were in the hands of landlords and rich peasants.[58] Rural upper class control of local organizations seriously compromised the goals of the revolution. As one party document revealed:

> The land problem in southwestern Jiangxi has never achieved complete settlement in the past few years. Generally speaking, landlord party members have been intentionally resisting the land revolution. Their slogan, "Communist Party Members' Lands Will Not Be Redistributed," and their erasing of the world "landlord" from the slogan of "Confiscating Landlords' and Bad Gentry's Lands" are good examples.[59]

d. Finally, the Jiangxi revolution was also weak judged by the outcomes of the revolution. Although the revolution in Jiangxi was created and

mobilized by the CCP, which implemented radical policies, the outcomes were disappointing. This was demonstrated by the failure of the communist land revolution. The land revolution started in the region in 1930 soon after Mao established the base area. The speedy implementation of a very radical land program was intended to raise the class consciousness of the peasants and their support of the revolution. However, by 1933 the CCP found that its land revolution in fact was a failure. As a result, the CCP from June 1933 launched a new round of the land revolution campaign called the Land Investigation Campaign.

In "The Order on Land Investigation Campaign from the Central Government," the party acknowledged the failure of land revolution in southwestern Jiangxi and western Fujian:

> In every Soviet region and particularly the Central Soviet region, there are still large areas where the land problem has not yet been solved. These areas constitute almost 80% of the Central Soviet Area and affect more than 2 million peasants. They include the entire counties of Ruijin (except the Wuyang district), Huichang, Xunwu, Anyuan, Xinteng, Yundu (except the Xinpo district), Lian, Yihuang, Guangchang, Shicheng, Jiannin, Lichuan, Ninghua, Changting, Wuping, and most parts of counties like Fusheng, Shengli, Yongfeng, and parts of counties like Gonglue, Wantai, Shanghang, Yongting, and Xinquan.[60]

In summary, the peasant revolution in Jiangxi was conservative judged by the four criteria. Peasants' response to the top-down revolution of the CCP was passive. The mobilization by the CCP did not foster widespread peasant participation in the transformation of their own society. For a long time, local revolutionary organizations were controlled by rural upper classes. Even the land revolution did not achieve its intended effects and forced the CCP to launch a new round of efforts in 1933.

Communal organizations in Hunan and Jiangxi

This section examines whether formal cooperative institutions in Jiangxi and Hunan peasant communities followed different organizational principles and, if so, whether these principles shaped the different revolutionary patterns in the two provinces. I find that both provinces had strong communal cooperative institutions. However, they followed very different organizational principles because of their different origins of cooperation. This in turn determined their different tendencies for agrarian revolution in the early twentieth century.

Patrilineally organized Jiangxi communities

The organizational response by southern Jiangxi communities to their environment resulted in a distinctive, corporate lineage-centered communal organizational framework. This was the result of migration into a resource poor and lawless frontier region.

Chinese civilization was born in the Yellow River valley in central China. The vast southern part of contemporary China was long considered a barbarian region. However, driven by dynastic change, wars, and foreign invasions, the ethnic Han Chinese living in central China were forced to expand into the unfamiliar and harsh southern barbarian region. In this process of Han Chinese migration to the South, the most important wave was the migration of the so-called Hakka ("guest people") into the present tri-border regions of southern Jiangxi, northeastern Guangdong, and southwestern Fujian.[61]

Beside major migrations by Hakka in the region, there were also many smaller migrations within the southeastern region of China during Qing times. The most prominent was that of the "shed people," who populated the mountains along the borders between Jiangxi and Guangdong, and between Jiangxi and Fujian. "Shed people' refers to migrants who lived in simple huts up in the mountains. According to Averill, from early Qing there were migrations of people, mostly Hakkas, from inland Fujian and Guangdong into mountainous areas of southern Jiangxi that became known as the "strongholds of shed people activity."[62]

The Hakka core region, together with greater Southeast China, which comprises Fujian, Taiwan, and Guangdong, was characterized by constant inter-community competition for survival and development. This was caused by the unique ecological and social environments of the region. The southeastern part of China during Qing suffered severe ecological pressures. The southeastern region, except its coastal parts, is hilly. Lands suitable for agricultural purposes were limited and grossly inadequate for the quickly growing Hakka population.[63]

The ecological pressures and limited natural resources in the region were greatly aggravated by the constant population migration that characterized the region. The problem was that migrants to the area would inevitably ask for a share of the local resources. This greatly sharpened the ecological problem for the native residents and led to

conflicts and competitions between existing communities and new communities of migrants. Cohen's classical study traces the history of conflicts between Hakkas and local communities in Guangdong. The local Cantonese speaking communities, called "*puntis*" (local people), mobilized to defend their interests in face of encroaching Hakka. Cohen's study finds that the southward movement by Hakkas "led to increasingly frequent battles with the Cantonese."[64]

However, conflicts between native and migrant communities were not confined to Hakka. The "shed people" in new communities in the hills also competed with existing local communities on the plains and in valley areas. Liu Min's study of shed people in southern Jiangxi shows that to control the conflicts between the local communities and communities of shed people, the Qing government adopted a policy of segregation. They ordered shed people and local people to enter into separate population registration systems and they had to live in separate communities.[65] Mao Tse-tung noted that even in the early Republican era the conflicts between the two sides in southern Jiangxi were still very intense. He found that in the southern border regions, a "very deep division" existed between local populations and migrants. "Migrants occupied hilly areas and were suppressed by local populations who controlled the plains."[66]

Thus, pervasive inter-community competition characterized the social environments of southeastern China. It was the result of demographic change and constant population movement in a resource-poor ecological setting. This problem was further intensified by the lawless frontier society with weak state authority. Here, communities had to survive as if in a state of nature. Frequent and large-scale armed feuds became the major means through which communities took the law into their own hands. Feuds in this region were particularly notorious in China during the Qing time. The Qing Court frequently expressed its grave dissatisfaction with the widespread armed feuds in Jiangxi, Fujian, and Guangdong. In Lamley's study of armed feuds among communities in southeastern China, he noted that this phenomenon was both the result of scarce resources and an expanding population, on the one hand, and weak state authority, on the other hand.[67]

This social environment of southern Jiangxi and western Fujian resulted in widespread patrilineally organized rural communities in the region. British anthropologist Maurice Freedman first found that the dominant community organizational form in southeastern China was

strong corporate lineages.[68] According to J. Watson, a lineage "is a corporation in the sense that members derive benefits from joint-owned properties and shared resources; they also join in corporate activities on a regular basis. Furthermore, members of a lineage are highly conscious of themselves as a group in relation to others, whom they define as outsiders."[69]

Freedman, while hypothesizing a number of causes for the strong corporate lineages in the region, primarily emphasizes its lawless frontier environment. In addition to the cooperative effort necessary to bring wild land under cultivation, there was also a need for organized defense. As he observes:

> When settlement took place in rough frontier conditions, single lineage communities were likely to develop fairly quickly and when, in contrast, people moved into areas under firm government control, any initial agnatic heterogeneity in the incoming groups was probably perpetuated.[70]

Potter's study of lineage-centered communities in southeast China also notes the role of the lawless frontier setting. According to him, "In such a weakly controlled area, conditions often approached a state of near anarchy, and strong lineages was one method of mutual protection and self-help. The lineages would take on important legal, political, and military functions."[71] As he continues, "Under frontier conditions, strongly organized and highly integrated lineages, were almost essential for continued survival."[72]

Zhuang Jifa's research on lineage organization in Fujian also demonstrated how, as organizational responses to existing powerful lineages, weak communities and small surname groups had to organize into large, artificially created lineages to compete.[73] He found that both in late Ming and early Qing it became very common for small groups to unite in order to counter large lineages that exploited them. The lineages created through this fusion process often deliberately chose a common surname that expressed their purpose of unity. These artificially created surnames included, for example, Tong (togetherness), Qi (united), Bao (encompassing), and Hai (universal).[74]

Lineage organizations in the rural communities of southeastern China were characterized by unique institutions. They included rituals, corporate properties, leadership and decision-making, and social-welfare functions.

a. Ritual practice: An important part of lineage life was centered on regular ancestral worship. Since lineage was based on common descent, the cult of the ancestor was paramount in maintaining the organization. In Potter and Potter's words, the ancestral cult was the world view of lineage members.[75] As Watson notes, the members of a lineage celebrate a ritual unity that implies "that members of a lineage are conscious in and of themselves as a group. It follows, therefore, that a lineage cannot exist unless its members gather periodically, at a grave or a hall, to celebrate rites of unity."[76]

Ancestral cult rituals were frequently and regularly held by almost all lineages in southeastern China periodicallty to revive and reinforce the group consciousness of common belonging. As British anthropologist Baker points out, "The Chinese lineage is founded in both kinship and ritual."[77] Usually members of a lineage participated in the rites led by lineage elders. The process was solemn and highly elaborate. In many lineages in southeastern China the expense of ancestral worship consumed a large portion of the lineage incomes from their corporate properties.

After their rather solemn parts, rites were usually followed by a feast of the entire lineage. Even though this part of the ritual stood in sharp contrast to the sacred nature of ancestral worship, its function was the same. The wild drinking and eating by all members promoted a sense of brotherhood and equality.[78]

b. Corporate land: As Watson points out, one of the defining features of lineage was the existence of jointly-owned property, which usually took the form of corporate land. This institution was extremely important because it determined the ability of a lineage to survive as an organization. Common land provided the most important material base for this purpose. According to Potter, "Collectively owned land in the form of ancestral estates is a *sine qua non* for the development of strong lineage organization in China."[79]

Beside financing the building of ancestral halls and supporting ancestral worship, the most important role of corporate land was to retain lineage members for economic reasons and thus promote lineage solidarity. One way of economically retaining members was to provide personal income for lineage members from the division of surplus income from the common property. Even after the ritual expense the lineage often still had a surplus from the rent of its corporate land and

it could be dispensed to lineage members either directly or through various social welfare benefits.

Because of its central importance in maintaining the lineage as an organization, corporate land constituted a large portion of the total agricultural land in southeastern China before 1949. In most communities, corporate land usually ranged around 30 percent or higher. In Chen Han-sheng's classic 1936 study of Guangdong, he found that, based on the lowest estimate, no less than 35 percent of the land in the province was corporate land.[80] In Fujian, corporate land constituted perhaps an even larger share of agricultural land. Communist land reform documents revealed that in the 1940s, corporate land in northern Fujian averaged 58.32 percent, in eastern Fujian 49.53 percent, in northwestern Fujian 66.92 percent, in southern Fujian 44 percent, and in central Fujian 48.92 percent.[81]

In core areas of Jiangxi revolution, communist documents showed the importance of corporate land in local economies. For example, Mao Tse-tung's investigation in Xunwu County in southern Jiangxi found that 40 percent of its land was lineage owned.[82] A CCP report from Chang Ting County identified 33 percent of its land as corporate controlled.[83] Another CCP report also showed that 33 percent of the land in Gong Lue County belonged to ancestral estates.[84]

c. Social welfare services: Beside the common land that offered direct material inducements for members to stay in the organization, lineage also provided a variety of welfare services. These included lineage schools for the education of all lineage children, charities to support the old and widows, and expenses for the burial of the dead.

As Chen Han-sheng discovered in the local chronicle of Mei county, a Hakka area in North Guangdong, of the social welfare functions of lineages in the nineteenth century:

> It has been a long and well established tradition to maintain Tai-fien or the clan land for ancestral worship. The annual income thereof, besides defraying the expenditure for worship, has a threefold use. Those families sending their boys to the ancestral temple to study may receive a regular stipend; also scholars in the clan who have been admitted to the public ceremony of worshiping Confucius may receive an annual subsidy; and those scholars who are to participate in the civil service examinations either in the provincial or in the national capital, may have their travelling expenses partially or entirely paid from the clan fund.... The finance of the clan does not confine itself to

> education. All the elders who are above sixty years of age receive an annual grant of rice and, on every occasion of ancestral worship, a certain amount of meat. Some of the very poor or permanently disabled members of the clan also enjoy such an annual grant. Some financial assistance is given, too, to those clan members who cannot meet the expense of the wedding or funeral. Whenever a famine occurs, relief is offered from the clan treasury.[85]

d. Lineage leadership and decision-making: Lineage leadership was also unique in that it was the elders who formally controlled lineage affairs. As Chen Han-sheng found, "As a rule, the clan head is the oldest man of the clan, and the clan chief or clan trustee is selected from among the oldest generation living."[86] C. K. Yang's study of Guangdong communities in the 1940s found that, "The clan was directed by the council of elders and the business manager. In principle, the council of elders was the center of authority that made all important decisions concerning the affairs of the clan."[87]

In some lineages, the real power was vested in managers of ancestral estates and corporate property. However, even these elite positions were usually awarded on merit. According to Chen Han-sheng, "The clan manager, the clan treasurer, or the clan chief-accountant, is usually somebody who in his early years has passed the civil service examinations, or somebody who has graduated from a certain provincial school."[88] Not only was the manager someone who had certain qualifications for his position, there were also specific rules on the terms of appointment, "Normally, the clan treasurer or the clan chief-accountant holds his office for one year, but he may be reappointed year after year."[89]

Thus, the formal leadership in lineages was either based on seniority, like lineage heads and lineage councils, or on merits, like lineage managers and treasurers. Even though a rich member might have greater influence on lineage affairs than a poor member, the formal decision-making institution and rules in lineage organizations were unrelated to the wealth of members.

In summary, rural communities in southeastern China, including southern Jiangxi and western Fujian, had to adapt organizationally to a social environment characterized by intense inter-community competition in a lawless and resource-poor region. As a result, strong corporate lineages emerged as the dominant form of community organization in the region. The emphasis on ritual unity, common corporate property, extensive welfare services, and elder-controlled decision-

making processes helped strengthen group solidarity, which was essential for survival amid constant inter-community competition.

Paramilitarily organized Hunan communities

While community competition in a resource poor frontier society constituted the social environment of southern Jiangxi, peasant rebellions and state breakdown shaped the social environment of Hunan in the late Qing. This section shows how during the nineteenth century the organizational context of Hunan rural communities became highly militarized in response to the widespread peasant rebellions and state breakdown.

Paramilitary-based organizational frameworks in Hunan emerged as communal responses to the the great Taiping Rebellion that swept China from 1850 to 1864. The rebellion was organized by a Christian named Hong Xiuquan and his sect, Worshiping God Society, in Guangxi province in southwestern China. Because of its millennial appeal the rebellion quickly draw a large crowd of followers and expanded into forces of about 20,000 by the end of 1850. Taiping forces won a series of victories against the Qing army due to the talents of Taiping leaders and their highly disciplined and cohesive forces. In 1852, Taiping forces decided to leave Guangxi and expand into richer and more populous central China along the Yangtze River. They first entered Hunan to the north of Guangxi. For over a decade, the history of Hunan was fundamentally influenced by the Taiping rebellion.

Taiping forces entered Hunan in 1852. In October of that year, they almost captured the capital city of Changsha. Although, due to a change in strategy, Taiping forces later passed through Hunan and instead occupied the Hubei province to the north, Hunan for over a decade was the battle line between the orthodox and Taiping forces, which now controlled all the provinces east of Hunan along the Yangtze River to the eastern coast of China.

More importantly, the Taiping rebellion created a revolutionary opportunity for the already highly unstable Hunan society. Before the arrival of the Taiping forces Hunan had had a long history of rebellions differing in natures and sizes. Hunan had been strongly influenced by various sects, primarily the White Lotus Society and the Heavenly Earth Society. When Taiping forces swept through Hunan, they created a vast revolu-

tionary opportunity for rebellious native forces. These forces seized upon the weakening of the traditional state order and the defeat of the orthodox military forces to undertake a new wave of uprisings. As Zeng Guofan, the leader of Hunan orthodox elites, noted, "Hunan has long been an incubator for sect activities." He predicted that "the breakout of rebellions by bandits will occur month after month and county after county."[90]

To fight both Taiping and local rebellions, Hunan landed elites sought to strengthen institutional capacities to defend their interests. In essence, these organizational responses were designed both to mobilize resources for the orthodox side and demobilize resources for the rebellious side. Peasant rebellions, including Taiping, are social movements that derive their momentum from continuously mobilizing discontented social sectors, primarily peasants. A rebellion can only expand if it could successfully recruit new members into the movement. To defeat a rebellion it is necessary to control the resources that could otherwise be mobilized by rebellious organizations. As Tilly observes, "Mobilization implies demobilization. Any process by which a group loses collective control over resources demobilizes the group."[91]

Hunan landed elites initiated a series of organizational responses to achieve these mobilization goals at both the provincial level and the local community level. At the provincial level, the Hunan landed class correctly perceived that, because of the failure of the Qing army, they had to rely on themselves and build an alternative military instrument to defend not only their own interests but also the entire orthodox socioeconomic order. Zeng Guofan, a high Qing official and the leader of the Hunan gentry class, led the process of conceiving of and building a private military, the Hunan Army. Through his extraordinary leadership, landed elites' mobilization of resources was so successful that from the several battalions in 1853 the Hunan Army quickly expanded into a military force of over 400,000 strong.[92]

This private army from Hunan fought Taiping forces in all the provinces along the Yangtze River and single-handedly defeated Taiping in 1864. It was the only time in Chinese history that the state was saved from great societal challenges because of the private efforts of its elite classes. At the height of its political and military influence, generals of the Hunan Army controlled the governorships of 13 out of 18 provinces in China.[93]

However, this article focuses on the community-level organizational response by the landed class that had the most direct impact on communal organizational frameworks in Hunan. In addition to countering Taiping militarily through the Hunan Army on the national level, the landed class of Hunan also correctly perceived that it must be able to counter Taiping forces and Taiping-instigated local rebellions on the home front. This meant that Hunan orthodox elites had to mobilize peasants at the community level. Mobilization would not only give rural communities the necessary resources to defend themselves against small-scale attacks, it would also demobilize potential rebel resources.

The solution of the Hunan landed class was to build and impose a new kind of community organization. This organizational structure centered on a widespread system of militia institutions called *tuan-lian.* In Chinese "*tuan*" means group and "*lian*" means training. Zeng Guofan noted that *tuan-lian* had two components. According to him, "*Tuan* was the system of *baojia.*" *Baojia* was a population control system through group responsibility. *Lian* was to "build weapons and train able persons."[94] Thus, the *tuan* component of local militia emphasized community control and demobilization while the *lian* component emphasized community mobilization for self-defense against rebels.

According to Zeng, it was very important to isolate peasants from the influence of Taiping. As he wrote, "We must make peasants fear us more than fearing the bandits."[95] That is, the landed class must use *baojia* to create terrors among peasants and raise their cost of joining the rebels. *Baojia* was a communal registration, surveillance, and mutual responsibility institution. Any failure to report illegal behaviors or suspicious persons meant group punishment for the member families.[96]

Tuan-lian started at the community, or the village level. In Kuhn's words, it was the village that constituted the "smallest nucleus of local militarization: the simplex *tuan.*" This village level *tuan* was usually called a *xiao tuan*, meaning small *tuan.*[97] However, the requirement of local defense inevitably brought forth larger scales of organization. A confederation of up to a score or more villages might form a large *tuan*, which Kuhn called a multiplex *tuan.* As he notes,

> To overwhelm the defense of an isolated village was a relatively simple business; but it was risker to penetrate a confederation of fortified settlements.... Though the militia of a simplex *tuan* posed no great threat of numbers, a confederation could concentrate men from an area of many square miles and thus change the balance of forces very quickly.[98]

With the efforts of the landed class, Hunan rural communities in a very short period of time built an extremely widespread *tuan-lian* system. This organizational response at the community level completely militarized the community organizational frameworks. *Tuan-lian* achieved a very high density in Hunan rural communities. For example, there were 121 *tuan* in Shanhua County alone. In Huarong County, there were 153 *tuan*. In Pingjiang County, the number was 146. In Changsha City and its immediately surrounding rural areas there existed 87 *tuan*. In Xiangin County, there was an astounding 318 *tuan*. In Luiyang County, in some areas there was one *tuan* every *li* (about one-third of a mile).[99]

In summary, *tuan-lian* militarized the organizational frameworks of Hunan rural communities. Landed gentry created and imposed the system as a communal organizational response to peasant rebellions and state breakdown. *Tuan-lian* as communal cooperative institutions were created both to mobilize anti-revolutionary forces and to demobilize potentially rebellious forces.

The 1864 defeat of Taiping by the Hunan Army did not end the militarization of Hunan community organizational frameworks. Once organizations came into being, they took on a life of their own. More importantly, the social environments of Hunan after Taiping still required mobilization and defense capabilities in rural communities. The first threat came from the sect activities of Gelao Hui in Hunan after the defeat of Taiping. The second threat came from the great social chaos during state breakdown in the early republican era.

However, the functions of *tuan-lian* as a communal cooperative institution began to change profoundly after Taiping. Since it was created and imposed by the landed class, it inevitably transformed itself from a community defense institution into an institution of class rule and exploitation. The Qing was irrevocably weakened militarily and financially during the Taiping rebellion. With the decline of Qing state control, power shifted downward to the local level in decades after Taiping. *Tuan-lian* provided the landed gentry class, for the first time, an institutionalized local power base to carry out class rule. After Taiping, *tuan* gradually acquired many powers that became institutionalized in Hunan rural communities.

a. Rent collection power: Originally the landed class could not themselves settle traditional rent disputes with tenants. There were state laws prohibiting arbitrary actions by the landed class in the country-

side. Instead, rent disputes had to be settled through mediation and arbitration at county magistrate's courts. However, the degeneration of *tuan* amid diminishing state control in late Qing for the first time gave the landed class the institutional means to settle rent-related disputes directly with peasants. The landlord class in Hunan could now use *tuan* to perform the function of rent collection directly.

For instance, in Chang Zhou County, landlords who had troubles with tenants over rent payment asked for help from *tuan*. It was stipulated that *tuan* would collect rents from tenants on behalf of landlords and could keep a certain amount as commission.[100] Wang Yingfu found that in some places, "During spring and autumn, peasants paid their rent directly to *tuan* heads."[101] The rent collection power became so widespread that Zeng Guofan once observed in a letter that it was one of the two most important activities of *tuan*. "The business of bureaus are nothing except practicing martial arts and rent collection."[102]

b. Tax collection power: Beside rent collection for landlords, *tuan* also gradually became tax collection agencies for the state. The county magistrates found *tuan* a convenient tool for tax collection in the countryside. The landed gentry who controlled *tuan* were also eager to perform this function because they could benefit from the process through embezzlement and bribe.

As Kuhn found, the tax collection function in counties was originally performed by a bureaucratic apparatus called *lijia*. This system was often inefficient and ineffective. With the emergence of *tuan*, these problems could be solved through the collaboration with *tuan*, which could use their coercive power to collect taxes from peasants.[103]

The landed gentry class used *tuan* to collect taxes for the state because they could profit from the process. The Qing state had a long-term practice of *baolan* (engrossment), which was "a form of unauthorized tax-farming in which local elites assumed the prerogative of collecting the tax of commoners for commission." Under this *baolan* system local landed elites had strong incentives to collect taxes in communities on behalf of the state.[104] Peasants suffered most from this *baolan* system since it gave the landed class strong motives for being exploitative and ruthless.

c. Taxing power: Beside collecting taxes for the state, *tuan* also gradually acquired their own taxing powers. *Tuan* originally depended on volun-

tary or forced donations to keep the organizations going. Gradually *tuan* were allowed to tax by themselves in order to find more institutionalized financial sources. The taxes came from trade but primarily from a special land tax.

The landed class had strong incentives to increase taxes because they could enrich themselves through embezzlement. As Zeng Guofan observed, "*Tuan* were originally on the side of law. However, they now practice bad deeds. County officials use them to collect fees. Bureau gentry themselves also profit from them."[105]

To maximize their gains, the landed gentry who controlled *tuan* had a strong tendency to levy under all kinds of pretexts. As one Qing official named Yan Zhongyi observed, *tuan* "use the name of public to benefit the interests of private.... They either extort from county and prefecture governments, or tax common people. They establish tax bureaus beside the state tax bureaus. They set up *lijin* (commerce taxes) beside state *lijin*."[106] The excessive taxes by the *tuan* angered even Zeng Guofan. He feared that this would turn Hunan peasants to new rebellions. In a latter to Li Zhuquan, he complained that the *tuan* had levied too much and called for them to control their taxing activities in the countryside.[107]

The broad economic power of the *tuan* in Hunan was not confined to their taxing authority. In some places they even assumed the power of managing local public funds for such works as repairing roads and building bridges. In Liu Yang County, for example, in one district the head of a higher order *tuan* controlled local public funds for 20 years. He embezzled over 800 *shi* (a weight unit) of grain during the process.[108]

Some *tuan* even used the grain they taxed from peasants to issue shark loans. For example, a *tuan* in Xiang Tan County had 2000 *shi* of taxed grain. The landed elites who controlled this *tuan* used it for shark loans. When grain prices were high, they sold the grain and pocketed the profit. When grain prices were *low*, they forced local peasants to borrow the grain as loans with very high interest rates.[109]

d. Police and judicial powers: The *tuan* also helped the landed gentry class to acquire formal coercive powers through performing police and judicial functions. They acquired the police role through the *baojia* system, the harsh group responsibility system of social control. The

tuan had the authority to arrest anyone who opposed their dictatorship in communities. They also had their own judicial systems including courts and jails. As Mao Tse-tung found of the *tuan* in the Hunan countryside, "They have independent judicial authority in arresting, interrogating, and imprisoning peasants."[110] They could arbitrarily punish peasants who delayed or resisted paying taxes and rents. As sources in the 1920s revealed, they could even execute leaders of activist groups working for the rights of peasants. The broad police and judicial powers of the *tuan* were used by the landed gentry class as a coercive tool to make good their powers in other community affairs, such as rent and tax collection.

To summarize, *tuan-lian* was a communal cooperative institution imposed by Hunan landed elites to defend their class interests during the Taiping rebellion. After the rebellion, the landed gentry class transformed the *tuan-lian* into organizations with a broad range of powers that essentially represented a class dictatorship in rural communities. It became a tool of open class exploitation and oppression by the Hunan landed class.

Rural organizational frameworks and peasant revolutions

This article argues that agrarian revolution can be caused by peasants' attempts to restructure the organizational principles of their communities. Peasants considered some organizational frameworks fair and certain others not. Agrarian revolution is here interpreted as an organizational phenomenon in which peasants seek to restructure illegitimate communal organizational frameworks and establish new rules for community cooperation. This organizational perspective on agrarian revolution, I argue, can resolve the puzzle presented by the peasant revolutions in Hunan and Jiangxi.

Communal organizational legitimacy in Jiangxi

Peasants living in communities organized by voluntary cooperative institutions, such as the patrilineally organized Jiangxi peasant communities, are likely to evaluate their community organizational framework as fair and thus legitimate. First, the organizational ideology of these communities emphasizes shared group identity and common interests among members. Peasants perceive that intracommunity re-

lationships are characterized by equality among members and shared beliefs and goals.

Organizational control in these communities emphasizes normative and remunerative powers. In Jiangxi, normative powers were mainly achieved through the practice of community rituals that promote celebration of membership and acceptance as well as personal identification with the organization. Communities organized by voluntary cooperative institutions also use remunerative powers for control. This is mainly achieved by concrete material benefits to members who follow the rules and norms of the organization. In Jiangxi peasant communities, the strong economic bases of patrilineal organizations enabled them to provide many excludable material benefits to members and thus broadly utilize remunerative control powers.

In these peasant communities, decision-making tends to follow consensus or some kind of democratic procedure. The community elites are selected neither by merit or election. These communities, therefore, have open organizational processes. The patrilineally organized peasant communities in Jiangxi followed very similar practices in decision-making and sources of elites. The decision process in a lineage-based community formally did not discriminate against anyone. All male members enjoyed equal formal rights in decision-making. The most important decisions concerning the organization, such as sale of corporate land, had to be collectively made by all male members.

Lastly, community cooperative institutions also benefit most community members. These communities tend to operate redistributive mechanisms to provide benefits to less well-off members. Interest redistribution is achieved by various kinds of leveling practices. In Jiangxi, the community could directly level wealth through annual division of income from corporate property, lineage schools, grants to the old and widowed, and relief during famine.

In summary, peasants living in rural Jiangxi communities were predisposed to positive evaluation of and attachment to their community organizational frameworks. In community affairs, peasants interpreted these frameworks as fair and just. As a result, the organizational context of rural communities of southern Jiangxi seriously constrained the revolutionary behavior of their peasants even though the Chinese Communist Party completely created and mobilized the revolution.

Peasants in Jiangxi considered a patrilineally defined community-organizational context legitimate because its ideologies, organizational processes, and organizational outcomes formally treat members equally. Thus, there were few organizational pressures to restructure the existing community organizational framework. This explains why the response of Jiangxi peasants to the revolution was very conservative in comparison to that of Hunan peasants, even though the Communist Party was much more involved in Jiangxi. Peasants' behaviors in Jiangxi were conservative by several measures. Local-level revolutionary organizations were controlled by the rural upper classes for a long time. Peasants showed great unwillingness to take part in the revolutionary process (e.g., joining the Red Army) even when given strong selective incentives. Peasants were even unwilling to participate in the land revolution. After three years of land revolution in southern Jiangxi, the Communist Party found that the land problem had not been solved in 80 percent of the base areas. As a result, the Party had to launch a second land revolution called the Land Investigation Campaign.

Many Communist Party documents revealed the great difficulty of undertaking an agrarian revolution in a legitimate community organizational context in southern Jiangxi. As a 1932 report by the CCP Jiangxi Provincial Committee observed, "the landlord class use lineage corporate land to divide parts of their income to poor lineage members and use lineage funds to support education of lineage kids. As a result, peasants hold strong lineage ideology and compromise with the landlords of their lineages."[111]

Moreover, peasants in many places in southern Jiangxi openly resisted the revolution in defense of their community organizations. As a report by Chen Yi to the Party center revealed, "Many peasants, to defend lineages, stand out to oppose dividing grains and properties. We can neither shoot them nor jail them. If we shoot them, some bad influence may occur. If we let them go, they have indeed committed anti-revolutionary actions."[112]

The conservative peasant behavior was not surprising at all because even local-level revolutionary organs were subsumed within larger lineage organizational structures. As a report by Yang Kemin noted, "In every village and every Party committee, when Party organizations hold meetings, they are like lineage conferences. The same is also true with Soviet organizations."[113] The Soviet organizations were the governmental organs of the Jiangxi Soviet Republic. Thus as Yang

concluded, "Why revolutionary forces are weaker than the feudal forces in rural areas is because feudal lineage forces are stronger than revolutionary forces."[114]

The local-level revolutionary organs subsumed within the lineage organizations were themselves against fundamentally restructuring the existing community organizational frameworks and the socio-economic orders they maintained. In Jiangxi, it was this outside revolutionary force that organized and implemented a top-down rural revolution. However, local Party organizations were against a radical revolution. For a period, they opposed a radical land revolution that would redistribute all community land. In a joint conference by the Red Army and local Party organizations in February of 1929, the Red Army supported this radical policy. Mao Tse-tung strongly criticized the slow pace of local organizations in land revolution and argued that "the inaction in land redistribution is a very opportunistic policy." Local Party organizations, however, proposed a policy that confiscated and redistributed only the land of "reactionary" landlords and the "surplus" land of rich peasants, arguing that corporate land should not be redistributed to peasants.[115]

Although the policy of the Red Army was finally adopted because of its military hegemony in the region, local Party organizations still resisted and compromised the land revolution during implementation. Thus, in 1933, after three years of land revolution, the Party found that the land problem had not been settled in 80 percent of the base areas.

The failure of the land revolution in patrilineally organized communities taught the Communist Party that other strategies were necessary to defeat the existing community organizations. The Party believed a social education campaign to raise the class consciousness of peasants was required. It would make peasants understand that community members were socially unequal and their community organizational structures involved exploitation and repression. The ideology of common group identity promoted by lineage organizations was simply a deception used by the rural upper classes to hide its social and economic dominance. The Party hoped that a social education campaign would break up the dominance of the old community organizations and deepen its rural revolution. For this purpose, Mao Ze-dong in June 1933 wrote his famous "How to Analyze Classes" to guide local officials in educating Jiangxi peasants about class and class exploitation.

Communal organizational illegitimacy in Hunan

In contrast to communal organizational legitimacy in Jiangxi, peasants living in communities organized by imposed cooperative institutions negatively evaluate their community organizational frameworks, judging them as unfair and thus illegitimate. First, the organizational ideology of these communities emphasizes control and dominance by one segment of the community. This results in the perception by peasants that the intracommunity relationship defined by the community organizational framework is characterized by inequality, dominance by some members, and conflicting interests among different community groups. The paramilitary organizations in Hunan peasant communities certainly did not seek to promote group consciousness and shared identity. Since the landed class imposed cooperative institution, organizational cohesion did not depend on ideology but on coercion. Moreover, the paramilitary organizations in Hunan were actually based on a perception of the community elites that members had different interests.

Organizational control in these communities with imposed cooperation emphasizes coercive power. The communal organizations are maintained by the use or threat of physical sanctions. Members who do not follow organizational rules and norms can be punished by the organization. In the Hunan case, the community organizational framework was maintained by an internal community police system. It used a group-responsibility control method. Households were divided into groups with collective responsibility for wrong-doings and failure to comply with rules. Punishment could be very heavy. *Tuan-lian* had the power to arrest, try, imprison, or even kill anyone who did not follow the rules.

In these peasant communities with imposed communal cooperation, decision-making is characterized by dictatorial rule by elites. In Hunan, the landed class imposed and controlled the paramilitary organizations. The leaders of communal organizations came almost entirely from the landed class. In many places the charter of paramilitary organizations specifically noted that organizational leaders must be from the landed gentry class. The pattern became even more clear in the early republican era when these organizations became completely controlled by the so-called "bad gentry and local bullies." As a result, decision-making was entirely an elite dominated and controlled process. The powerless position of peasants and the dominance of the landed elites in the paramilitary organizations of Hunan explain why they openly degenerated into instruments of class rule and exploitation.

This type of community organizational framework benefits only the elite members. The extensive powers of Hunan paramilitary organizations all served the class interests of landed elites. The landed elites expanded the powers of the organizations into many areas of the local economy for their own benefit. These organizations offered the landed class, for the first time, the means to settle rent-related disputes with peasants through coercive force. They also became a tax collection agency for the state, through which the landed elites could benefit via commissions and embezzlement. They also directly imposed many taxes and levies upon communities under all kinds of pretexts. Finally, many even forced communities to let them handle local public funds for schools and public works. Landed elites again could benefit from this power through corruption and embezzlement.

In summary, peasants living in Hunan communities were predisposed to perceive their community organizational framework as unfair and illegitimate. This article argues that agrarian revolutions can be caused by peasants' attempts to restructure the organizational principles of their communities. Since illegitimate organizational frameworks are maintained by coercive power, when some events beyond the community level open political space for peasants and lower the cost of overthrowing illegitimate organizational frameworks, a community-level organizational rebellion is likely to occur.

When a Nationalist and Communist coalition liberated Hunan from reactionary warlord rule, it opened a large political space favorable to a rural-based revolutionary movement. With this new political opportunity, a great peasant revolution broke out in the Hunan countryside. Peasants seized the opportunity to overthrow the existing exploitative and repressive communal organizational framework of *tuan-lian*.

The peasant revolution in Hunan was above all an organizational revolution. Thus, the most prominent feature of Hunan peasant revolution was that it was politically dominated. For some time the economic struggles of the Hunan peasant revolution were fairly moderate and were restricted to lower rent rates and better tenancy rules. Radical economic action such as land redistribution only occurrred at a later stage of the revolution. In contrast, the political organizational revolution was very prominent and radical.

Therefore, when the important First Congress of Hunan Peasants opened in December of 1926 and issued a resolution, the main political

demand was the first listed. Under the title of "Resolution on Rural Self-Governance," it was stated that the *tuan-lian* system had become the institution by which

> the landlord class rules peasants in collaboration with the warlords.... The landlord class uses *tuan-fang* (as *tuan-lian* was called in the early republican era) to repress the good and weak, interrogate and kill the innocent, embezzling public funds, and imposing heavy taxes and levies.... This organization of the feudal class is the real bedrock of imperialism and warlordism. The current peasant movement is exactly a movement that democratic forces rise to destroy this feudal force.[116]

Because of the central importance of community organizational change, the first action of the Hunan peasant revolution was to establish a new community cooperative institution, the peasant associations. These new peasant-controlled community organizations first destroyed the old community organizations' *tuan-lian* and the landed class that controlled them. As Mao found, after "the power and influence of the landlord class have been largely overthrown, such organs of rural administration naturally collapsed. The phrase 'down and out' certainly describes the fate of the old organs of rural administration."[117] With the political dominance of peasant associations, the old communal organizations either surrendered to peasant associations or were disarmed and disbanded totally. In many counties *tuan-lian* pledged allegiance to peasant associations and their leaders were elected by the communities or were simply selected by peasant associations.[118]

However, peasant associations were not only dominant new political organizations in communities, but also new community cooperative institutions entrusted with a broad range of authority and power. Peasant associations reflected the wishes of peasants to build new communal cooperative institutions that promoted justice and fairness. For example, peasant associations promoted a fairer economic order in rural communities. They set limits on rent and rent deposits. They also issued a widespread ban on the export of grain to other provinces to lower grain prices in the province for poor peasants.[119] Later in the revolution, many local level associations also organized radical land redistributions contrary to the conservative land policy of the Nationalist and Communist coalition.

In communal affairs, peasant associations had the authority to regulate many activities, including adjudication, public works, and enforcement of community rules and moral standards. As Mao Tse-tung vividly put

it, "Peasant associations making a fart will have some impact.... Even such small issues as fights between husbands and wives have to be settled by peasant associations. Nothing can be done without the presence of respresentatives from peasant associations."[120]

Peasant associations used this power to organize many community activities effectively. As many reports during the revolution noted, they organized communities to build roads, bridges, and irrigation facilities. With such success, "even those diehard landlords have to express secret admiration."[121] They also organized peasants to suppress the chronic bandit problem in Hunan. Because of their extensive membership network, the campaigns were like "people's war" and bandits had nowhere to hide. As Mao Tse-tung found, "many places no longer experience even burglary problems. Although burglary still exists in the counties I visited, all the places I went no longer have bandit problems."[122] And peasant associations also organized night schools to educate poor peasants. These "Peasant Schools" were financed with forced donations from landlords and with local public funds that had been used for community ritual services, and they were free to peasants.

In regulating moral behaviors, peasant associations also exercised strong regulatory powers. Opium was for the first time effectively banned by peasant associations. Now, associations used their extensive organizational networks to monitor and punish those who used opium. Those found using opium were publicly paraded and fined. Associations also set up many check points on major routes to other provinces to stop the smuggling of opium. As a result, opium use almost completely disappeared in the rural areas.[123] The associations also used their power to stop gambling in rural areas. Members of the Children's Corps searched every household for gambling tools. As a result during the revolution, gambling also disappeared in the countryside.

Peasant associations in some places in Hunan even prohibited binding women's feet and deliberately raised the social and political status of women. They encouraged women to join peasant associations and to work in the fields and factories. Mao recorded that in some places women were encouraged by peasant associations to organize their own women's associations. With the liberalization in treatment of women, Mao found that more liberal sexual relationships and many "triangular relationships" began to develop in rural areas.[124]

Finally, peasant associations also took on the feudal superstitious and religious establishment. "In many places temples were occupied by peasant associations as their meeting place. Almost everywhere peasant associations confiscated part of temple properties to be used as funds for schools and association expenses." As Mao said, usually "only the old and women believe in gods. No young and middle aged peasants believe in them. Thus overthrowing religious and superstitious orders took place in many places."[125]

In summary, peasant associations actually became the new principal cooperative institution. They created a new organizational framework in Hunan rural communities. They performed a wide range of roles and functions in community affairs. Peasants entrusted them with the power and authority to build a fair and just social, political, and economic order in their communities. The new organizational context dominated by peasant associations was considered fair and legitimate because it was controlled by peasants themselves and benefited all community members.

In conclusion of this section, the organizational framework of rural communities in Hunan and Jiangxi critically defined peasants' behavioral patterns in the two revolutions. An illegitimate framework in Hunan caused a restructuring of the organizational principles in rural communities when a nationalist revolution opened up political space. Peasants spontaneously established a new community institution, peasant associations, to promote fair and just communal cooperation. In contrast, a legitimate community organizational context in Jiangxi caused passive peasant behaviors during a CCP-created revolution. Peasants, even under strong mobilizing pressure from outside revolutionary organizations, were unwilling to restructure the existing community organizational relationships.

Conclusion

Drawing from the different revulutionary patterns in Hunan and Jiangxi, this research builds an alternative, organizational explanation of agrarian revolution. It argues that agrarian revolutions can be caused by peasants' attempts to restructure unfair and illegitimate community organizational frameworks. Essentially, these attempts are organizational rebellions to build new communal cooperative frameworks. Thus, we can interpret some agrarian revolutions as organizational phenomena.

This study demonstrates that the organizational context of peasant communities critically shapes peasants' social and political behaviors. This variable, however, has been omitted by existing theories of agrarian revolutions. The organizational approach of this article specifically challenges the Marxist economic determinism thesis, which holds that economic relationships determine the political choices of social classes. Political actions are based on the position of each class in the relations of production. This is a rationalistic interpretation of political actions, because it presumes that each class can rationally assess its economic interests within certain relations of production and fully comprehend the goals and consequences of its political actions. This thesis closely links the objective material factors and patterns of political behavior: the economic system creates objective interests for classes, and class members come to recognize their material interests and act to defend or promote these interests. Thus, this approach presumes that the relations of production define class relations, that the exploited segments of rural society have an implicit capacity to perceive the exploitative nature of the current relations of production, and that they are predisposed to alter that system. As Little observes, the Marxist class conflict explanations of peasant rebellion "postulate the strongest kind of collective rationality."[126]

The problem with this approach is that it assumes a direct relationship between the economic position of a group and its political motivation. Political behavior, however, is mediated by other factors, including culture, religion, social organization, and ideology. I argue that the organizational context of human societies also shapes political behaviors. Besides the economic relationship, the formal relational structures also define people's perception of justice and interests and thus the perceived need for political actions.

This research shows that, although class exploitation existed in the cases of Hunan and Jiangxi, their peasants interpreted inter-class relationships in very different ways. This was because peasants were organized through community organizations where inter-class relationships were mediated and expressed by different organizational mechanisms. The relational structures of communities interacted with and complemented the economic relationship and thus defined a perception of inter-class relationship that was very different from one defined solely by relations of production. The difference in revolutionary patterns in Jiangxi and Hunan was the result of the different formal relational structures of their rural communities.

This research also has implications for the study of the great Chinese revolution. Many scholars attributed the success of the Chinese Communist Party in the rural areas to its mobilizational capability through extensive organizational structures.[127] As Marks complains, studies of the origins of the Chinese revolution focus almost entirely on Communist organization and mobilization tactics: "Nearly all interpretations place its origins anywhere but in the rural society," because studies of the Chinese revolution place "explaining Chinese Communist success at the forefront."[128]

However, this study shows that CCP organizations and mobilizational capabilities in some cases failed to induce peasants into the revolutionary process. As recent studies on revolution note, theories that emphasize outside revolutionary organizations do not pay enough attention to the question: "why are *some* 'populations' *more* responsive to attempts at mobilization, while *other* populations within the same society are *less* responsive to such attempts?"[129] Instead, such theories hold that outside organizations practicing the same mobilization tactics would everywhere achieve the same effect. These theories therefore overlook the importance of the preexisting social economic structures of peasant societies to both the causes of agrarian revolutions and the revolutionary mobilization from outside organizations.

As Wickham-Crowley argues in his research on Latin American peasant rebellions, "The success of revolutionaries in mobilizing the peasantry depends primarily on the preexisting nature of peasant culture and social structure, and only secondarily on the actions of the revolutionaries themselves."[130] Likewise, the CCP mobilization explanation of the Chinese revolution should be put in a more balanced perspective. Although the Party's rural strategy worked in some places, in other places, such as in Jiangxi, preexisting communal institutions effectively tempered Party mobilization efforts. In other places, such as in Hunan, because of the repressive and exploitative community organizational frameworks, peasants rose up with little mobilization from the CCP.

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85. Chen Han-sheng, *Landlord*, 27.
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101. Wang Yingfu, "Tuanlian Iun," in Sheng Kang, 1897, 2282.
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107. Zeng Guofan, "Yu li zhuquan zhi jun shu," in Sheng Keng, editor, *Huang chao jing shi wen xu bian (The Classics of the Dynasty)* (Beijing: 1897, 2375).
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