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From Administrative Science to Chinese Statecraft:
The Local Governance of Central Politics School and Its Political Modernity, 1927-1945

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in History

by

Chen-cheng Wang

Dissertation Committee:

Professor Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, Chair

Professor Kenneth L. Pomeranz

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2015

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DEDICATION

To

My mother Shuxia and wife Hualing

*Their love, wisdom, and sacrifice
make my life wonderful and meaningful.*

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

From Administrative Science to Chinese Statecraft:
The Local Governance of Central Politics School and Its Political Modernity, 1927-1945

BY

Chen-cheng Wang

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Irvine, 2015

Professor Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, Chair

The present dissertation deals with how a specific kind of modern political discourse and practice, which was associated with an American style approach to public administration, was introduced, experienced, and then adapted during the 1930s and 1940s in China. The research focuses on local officials who graduated from the Central Politics School, an institution established by the Nationalist Party to train professional public administrators. These individuals were supposed to modernize the entire system of Chinese local governance, making it more rational by bringing it inline with the precepts of scientific knowledge and the scientific method. The actions of the school's graduates in various counties expose the failure of orthodox public administration methods to deal effectively with Chinese political reality, due to a tendency to underestimate the importance of variable human factors. It was, ironically, only when some of the school's best former students broke with the precepts of their training and use innovative strategies, which took local realities into account and made use of ideas derived from China's own statecraft traditions, that they achieved success. This dissertation thus suggests that researchers need to pay more attention in future to Chinese statecraft and its assumptions

regarding the importance of sensitivity to human nature and variability, as well as imported ideas concerning rationality and scientific methods, when trying to understand trends in Chinese politics and governance. Moreover, the historical meaning of the rise and deviation of public administration is by no means a story only of frustrated modernization or periodic revivals of “tradition.” Rather, it represents an important case study of how non-scientific indigenous resources are deployed in the face of drives in settings outside the West to impose a form of political modernity, which has the potential to overcome the problems insurmountable in the current political conceptual framework.

Introduction

The present dissertation deals with the following issue: how were understandings and practices of politics modernized, problematized and then indigenized during the 1930s and 1940s in China where the young American discipline of public administration was first vehemently adopted and then seriously adapted? What kind of political modernity was formed and reformed in the process of drastic change? Guided by these issues, this thesis will focus on a special group of young local officials who graduated from the Central Politics School, which was established by the Nationalist Party precisely for cultivating modern public administrators. The failure, innovation, success, and discourse of these professional officials in their efforts to reform local governance according to hegemonic and alternative conceptual frameworks of politics offer critical clues and facts that can help us better understand and answer aforementioned questions about the nature of political modernity in the China and world.

The first section of this introduction provides basic historical background about the Central Politics School and the local administrative experience of its graduates during the Nationalist period (1927-1949) in Republican China. It explains why the school, and the local officials who graduated from it, is a case worth researching in modern Chinese political history. This topic stands at a crux, connecting the break between “revolutionary” and “modernizing” historical narratives that has, in the past, prevented us from forming a comprehensive perspective of the overall track of modern Chinese political development. Furthering the explanation as to how and why the current scholarship on modern Chinese politics prevents researchers from giving enough attention to the history of the Central Politics School, the second section of the introduction will analyze the tenets of modern political conceptual frameworks, and consider how they influence

the way people understand and practice politics. This conceptual framework encourages a politics where the impetus is to objectify and minimize human factors in political processes, and shape a global hegemonic understanding of what politics means and how it should be run. Against this background, the third section of the introduction further explicates how modern understandings of politics influence and limit various focuses and approaches that scholars have taken to studying modern Chinese politics. After the limitations and problems of approaching Chinese politics through the conceptual framework formed by Western modernity have been sufficiently demonstrated, the fourth section discusses the concrete issue of this dissertation: the appearance of public administration as a typical embodiment of a modern understanding of politics requires a serious scholarly treatment which has not yet been conducted. By focusing on local administrators who graduated from the Central Politics School, and who were supposed to take the full responsibility of promoting public administration and modernization of local governance in Nationalist China, this dissertation intends to bring indigenous human/political knowledge and statecraft based on non-modern assumptions about human nature back to Chinese politics, and provide a necessary revisionist conceptual framework which redefines political modernity in the modern world.

Section One: Rethinking the Nationalist Party and Its Failure in Modern China

On 20 May 1940, the thirteenth anniversary of the establishment of Central Politics School (*zhong yang zheng zhi xue xiao* 中央政治學校), the school's founder and chancellor Chiang Kai-shek gave a speech to all teachers and students participating in the celebration ceremony. Chiang Kai-shek did not express the compliments people usually do on this kind of occasion and

in this kind of venue. On the contrary, he severely criticized the school's education and the performance of its graduates. While unreservedly praising the achievements of the Whampoa Military Academy in providing reliable and capable military officers who fought for the country and Chiang Kai-shek's regime, Chiang bluntly expressed his dissatisfaction with the Central Politics School:

In my view, the accomplishments of our school in the past years were far from meeting our expectations. The state's expectation for our school is not like the one for ordinary universities... The students of our school serve as cadres of Chinese political revolution in order to wipe out any corrupt and dark power in Chinese politics and remove all politico-economic bondage that imperialism has imposed on China... However, we are far from reaching these ideals.¹

Chiang Kai-shek then further blamed the School's graduates for having only knowledge (*zhi shi* 知識) but no common sense (*chang shi* 常識). He argued that proper common sense was indispensable if political workers were to communicate with ordinary Chinese people, and the lack thereof was the primary reason the Central Politics School graduates had failed to serve the "Chinese political revolution."

The role and function of Whampoa Military Academy is well known to Western historians (and to those with a passing interest in modern Chinese history), but the Central Politics School is quite unfamiliar even among Chinese historians. Why Chiang Kai-shek founded the school, what exactly he expected from the school's graduates, and how he became so impatient and disappointed with the school's performance are all questions that have no ready answers in extant Chinese and Western historiography. The role and function of this enigmatic school and its graduates in modern Chinese political history is precisely the theme of this dissertation.

¹ Chiang Kai-shek, "Zhong yang zheng zhi xue xiao chuang xiao de zong zhi yu jiao xue de fang zhen" (The Founding Objectives and Teaching Principles of Central Politics School), in *Zong tong jiang gong si xiang yan lun zong ji* (*The Corpus of President Jiang Jieshi's Thoughts and Speeches*), vol. 16, (Taipei: Guomintang Central Party History Committee, 1984), 340-341.

To be sure, it is reasonable for readers to question the value of researching such an obscure institute and ask: did the Central Politics School graduates have a role and function in modern Chinese politics? As is widely known by scholars, Chiang Kai-shek was fond of establishing schools and holding chancellorships of them all concurrently. Is the Central Politics School not just another institute, like the ones that trained fighter plane or tank pilots, built by Chiang for very practical purposes? If the Central Politics School and its members did exert an important influence in modern China, how have they gone unnoticed?

Answering these questions necessitates a proper comprehension of Nationalist China and the regime in which the Central Politics School operated. Thus, a short review of the current scholarship on Nationalist China will be beneficial.

Nationalist China (1928-1949), under the rule of the Nationalist Party (also *Kuomintang*, KMT or *Guomindong*, GMD), has been widely studied as a period of political failure. The victory of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1949 is an especially strong contributor to the impression of KMT failure. In comparison to the formidable organizational and mobilizing ability of the CCP both during and after the period of KMT rule, the Nationalist Party and its government appeared quite impotent when it came to disciplining its officials and cadres, and motivating them to acquire resources from Chinese society, particularly its rural areas, efficiently and sustainably.²

For some researchers, the political impotency of the Nationalist regime came mainly from its own ideological and organizational flaws, the so-called “seeds of destruction” fostered by the

² On CCP, see Chalmers Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power: the Emergence of Revolutionary China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962). Yung-fa Chen, *Making Revolution: the Communist Movement in Eastern and Central China, 1937-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). Mark Selden, *China in Revolution: the Yen-an Way Revisited* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1995). Pauling Keating, *Two Revolutions: Village Reconstruction and the Cooperative Movement in Northern Shaanxi, 1934-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

regime itself since the Party “aborted” the revolution in 1927 that had once provided some solid social support and initiatives for political mobilization.³ Although the Nationalist regime led by Chiang Kai-shek established a central government that achieved nominal unification in 1928, and remained the only internationally recognized national government for two decades, it was fundamentally guided and limited by a “politics of depoliticization” that avoided vehement mass political mobilization and drastic social reform. As such, even in its heyday on the eve of the full scale Japanese invasion in 1937, the Nationalist government could never compete with the political momentum that had been activated by the CCP.⁴ The regime only directly controlled a handful of provinces in East Central, Southeast, and Southwest China. Even in the areas where the Nationalist government had its most solid grip on power, the authority of the regime barely reached the sub-county level. With the demise of revolutionary radicalism, the regime seemed to have difficulty finding alternative discourses and practices capable of penetrating the grass roots of society and engaging with the power of local elites.⁵ Despite the fact that scholars are not in agreement when it comes to the degree to which the state became “involuting,” the deteriorating process in which modern Chinese regimes had increasing trouble getting resources from the society, while peasants experienced an increase in extraction, during the Nationalist period (particularly during the prewar era), due to these circumstances research tends to agree that the Nationalist regime suffered a decrease in state capacity and legitimacy over time.⁶

³ Lloyd E. Eastman, *The Abortive Revolution: China under Nationalist Rule, 1927-1937* (Cambridge, Mass. : Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1990). Lloyd E. Eastman, *Seeds of Destruction: Nationalist China in War and Revolution, 1937-1949* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984).

⁴ Huang Jianli, *The Politics of Depoliticization in Republican China: Guomindang Policy towards Student Political Activism, 1927-1949* (New York: P. Lang, 1996).

⁵ Xin Zhang, *Social Transformation in Modern China: the State and Local Elites in Hunan, 1900-1937* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Bradley K. Geisert, *Radicalism and Its Demise: the Chinese Nationalist Party, Factionalism, and Local Elites in Jiangsu Province, 1924-1931* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies Publications, 2001)

⁶ Prasenjit Duara, *Culture, Power, and the State: Rural North China, 1900-1942* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988). Susan Mann, *Local Merchants and the Chinese Bureaucracy, 1750-1950* (Stanford: Stanford University

After the 1980s, some revisionist works put forward a more positive image of the Nationalist regime in national and provincial level state building, although they did not directly confront the widely accepted academic understanding of the regime's fragile grass root governance. Such scholars observed that in certain departments of the central government, the Nationalist regime made impressive progress in terms of recruiting well educated professionals and intellectuals who were sincerely committed to the modernization of Chinese state and society.⁷ For example, German advisors and trained experts were appointed to build an elite corps of troops, in accordance with the most advanced military models. Other foreign educated scholars and intellectuals were also invited by the government to help establish a military and heavy industrial economy.⁸ The regime also marked a certain level of success in some large scale construction, such as the management of unruly Huai River.⁹ Last but not least, the regime registered its greatest achievement in urban areas, where a significant proportion of Nationalist officials and cadres received their education and started their careers. Some municipal governments, organized according to highly rationalized and professionalized principles, were established and run by the party's most modern minded members.¹⁰ Under the auspices of these modern municipal institutions, modern police and hygiene were introduced and institutionalized in urban and some parts of rural China.¹¹

Press, 1987).

⁷ Julia C. Strauss, *Strong Institutions in Weak Polities: State Building in Republican China, 1927-1940* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998). Morris Bian, "Building State Structure: Guomindang Institutional Rationalization during the Sino-Japanese War, 1937-1945," *Modern China* 31:1 (2005).

⁸ William C. Kirby, *Germany and Republican China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984). William C. Kirby, "Continuity and Change in Modern China: Economic Planning on the Mainland and on Taiwan, 1943-1958," *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 24 (1990).

⁹ David Allen Pietz, *Engineering the State: the Huai River and Reconstruction in Nationalist China, 1927-1937* (London: Routledge, 2002).

¹⁰ Michael Tsin, *Nation, Governance, and Modernity in China: Canton 1900-1927* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 180-183. Christian Henriot, *Shanghai 1927-1937: Municipal Power, Locality and Modernization* translated by Noel Castelino (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

¹¹ Federic Wakeman, *Policing Shanghai, 1927-1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). Ka Che Yip,

This recent revisionism, which focuses more on the goals and the efforts made by the Nationalist regime, rather than the failures as defined by the CCP paradigm, significantly improves our understanding of the place of the regime in modern Chinese history. However, consciously or unconsciously, it generates a gap between a promising, modernizing, Nationalist China centered around national and municipal governments, and a repressive one that languidly crouches in the countryside waiting for the takeover of the CCP. The two Nationalist Chinas seemed entirely disparate. Or, more precisely, the municipal Nationalist China simply becomes bogged down by the rural one, prevented from radiating its full potential by its disappointing twin. In other words, recent revisionist works largely preserve the earlier conclusion that judges the regime according to measures of CCP.

Within this historical narrative structure, the founding of the Central Party Affair School (*zhong yang dang wu xue xiao* 中央黨務學校), the predecessor of Central Politics School in Nanjing, 1927, is placed within a story of “the abortive revolution,” which can only lead to the ultimate failure of the regime. The Central Party Affair School was a one-year political cram school, designed to serve Chiang Kai-shek’s urgent needs for reliable party cadres in Nanjing, 1927. Such is the glare of the CCP victory, that the value of discussing a cram school that enforced the “reactionary” policy of strangling a great and real revolution is essentially eclipsed. By the same narrative structure, when the school was renamed and reorganized in 1929 into the Central Politics School so as to meet new requirements from the Nationalist regime after the nominal unification of China, its historical visibility is prone to be obscured by the modernizing vision that dominates most studies focusing on the Nanjing decade and after. As a result, the proclaimed goal of the Central Politics School to cultivate professional bureaucrats administering

Health and National Reconstruction in Nationalist China: the Development of Modern Health Services, 1928-1937 (Ann Arbor: Association for Asian Studies, 1995).

local, and especially county governments around the rural China, with modern municipal principles and practices becomes somewhat incomprehensible and unattributable in major historical narratives. It is all too easy for researchers to see the intention of Central Politics School exclusively from the vantage points of a modernization or a failed revolution paradigm. On the one hand, for those concerned with modernizing state-building, the administrative experience of Central Politics School graduates working in numerous remote small counties spreading all over the nation through 1930s and 1940s is too discrete as a whole and too trivial as individual cases, when compared to salient progress in a city or governmental department. On the other, for scholars familiar with revolutionary narratives, the Central Politics School county magistrates and administrators who were trained to be civil servants rather than revolutionary cadres are inevitably siphoned off into history's minor supporting roles. Small wonder, then, that the drastic and rapid transformation of the school - from Chiang Kai-shek's private training ground for realpolitik fighters to a de facto national formal undergraduate institute for the cultivating of modern bureaucrats - cannot draw significant scholarly attention. This is despite the school's audacious introduction of American public administration, allegedly the most cutting-edge administrative science at the time, as its core curriculum.

However, the potential of the Central Politics School as a worthwhile research topic lies exactly in the fact that the story of the school and its officials is hard to tell in either of the conventional narratives. The school appears at the crossroads of history, where urban modernizing and rural revolutionary approaches are still understood as integral parts of a united agenda. When Chiang Kai-shek and his close allies founded the Central Politics School and staffed it with professors having American public/municipal administration backgrounds, their focus was not limited to modernization in a few cities. Rather, they targeted numerous local

governments in huge areas outside treaty ports. They wanted to continue their own version of revolution by filling the main positions of local governance, especially county magistrates, with officials who owned undergraduate degrees and possessed modern administrative knowledge. As I will indicate in this dissertation, the historical significance of Central Politics School comes from the very fact that the program and experience of the school reveals a long-ignored but essential characteristic of modern Chinese local governance in particular (and politics in general): the scientization of political process.

There was a hidden context to the teaching of American public administration as a scientific discipline: County administration was designed and enforced as experiment. Only when researchers are fully aware of this underlying context and the characteristics of modern Chinese politics within it, do they realize, for example, that in terms of explaining the nature of Nationalist regime, the two experimental counties set up by the school to allow its students to experiment principles and practices of administrative science are more representative than any other state apparatuses, social groups, and geographic units.

Seen from this perspective, the historical significance of administrative experience and innovation on the part of the Central Politics School graduates actually rivals that of other modernizing and revolutionary endeavors. Moreover, considering that some of the school's best graduates eventually became conscious dissenters from orthodox public administration and intentionally resorted to non-scientific approaches of governance, the story of Central Politics School is rendered even more central to our understanding of modern Chinese politics. This "betrayal" of modern administrative science is crucial, not only because the value of science was not sufficiently appropriated and fulfilled by those well educated officials who were supposed to be most capable of pursuing it, but also because the alternative administrative discourses and

practices that the Central Politics School officials developed can shed light on the radical change of conceptual and explanatory frameworks that shaped how ordinary participants in modern Chinese politics perceived and behaved in the field named *zheng zhi* (政治 politics). Could there be any other political movement more revolutionary and modernistic than the school graduates' aspiration of turning politics into scientific formulas designed to be learnt by children in three minutes? If the answer is negative, then, one has to admit that the voluntary conversion of these radical modern officials to the seemingly most "moralistic" and "irrational" Confucian teachings, as I will indicate in this research, is an astounding phenomenon that can not be dismissed as the simple result of reactionary political ideology.

In this dissertation, I will use extensive materials left by Central Politics School members in forms of archives or reports regarding their internship and service. These sources contain thoughts and records that help us reflect on why politics in modern China could be taught as a science in a school and, more importantly, what made it still possible and necessary for the school's members to reframe and practice politics in ways that were very different from their own original education. Therefore, the story of Central Politics School is not only comprised of individual political events in revolutionary or modernizing scenarios, but also alludes to the overall profound transformation of the way politics was defined and done. Throughout this dissertation, I will repeatedly highlight the relationship between the experience of officials and their conceptual framework of politics, arguing that the influence of these conceptual frameworks have been largely underestimated by current scholarship, and are critical to the route of political development in modern China. In short, in representing the history of the Central Politics School officials, this dissertation invites readers to think across the parallel narratives emphasizing revolution and modernization respectively and see the macro framework that

structures both the failed rural governance and the successful municipal modernization of Nationalist China.

At this point, to help readers further understand why the scientization of political process is a dimension more central to modern Chinese historiography than the conventional themes afford, I will analyze the sorts of modern understandings of politics that made the idea of teaching and doing public administration as a science become possible.

Section Two: A Modern Conceptual Framework of Politics

The contemporary Chinese thinker Wang Hui has observed that a kind of depoliticized politics (*qu zheng zhi hua de zheng zhi* 去政治化的政治) has been pervasive both in China and internationally since the end of 1960s. Depoliticized politics, according to his definition, is an ideology that marginalizes the role of politics in life, replacing intellectual and academic consideration of political dimensions with non political, especially so-called “pure economic,” factors. For Wang Hui, this trend of depoliticization is a politics generated and promoted by Neoliberalism, which is intent on turning the entire world into a space where the circulation and accumulation of capital will be totally free. All hindrances to the free market and economic mechanisms will be proven unsound in front of the only universal value system: the economic logic of capitalism.¹² Wang senses in this politics “a doubt or even a denial of the entire 20th century China” since almost all aspects of life in China during this period were extremely politicized.¹³

¹² Wang Hui, *qu zheng zhi hua de zheng zhi: ba quan de duo chong guo cheng yu liu shi nian dai de xiao shi* (*The Depoliticized Politics: the Multi-construction of Hegemony and the Elapse of 1960s*) (Beijing: Sanlian, 2008), 40-41.

¹³ The 20th century in Wang’s narrative is a short and revolutionary one that began in 1911 and ended in around 1976.

Wang's perspective has a strong undertone that seeks to defend the legacy of the Chinese Communist revolution, especially that of the Mao era. In this context, politics roughly equates to the governmental redistribution of power and wealth, and mass democracy. This politics is only a means to fulfill the ultimate goal of modernization and social welfare. The legacy Wang Hui tries to defend is the fruition of state run modernization and its initial equalitarian basis created by the socialist revolution. Interestingly, he claims that the brutality and chaos of great political campaigns and conspiratorial clique struggles are the harbinger of later depoliticization, because they prevented the real democratic participation of people in politics. In other words, Wang Hui implies that real politics must be democratic. Most likely intentionally, Wang Hui does not pay too much attention to the development of the concept of modern politics on which his analysis rests, even though he admits that depoliticized politics is much more complicated than the ignorance and exclusion of mass participation. Instead of being a realm in which subjective initiatives compete and bargain, the depoliticized politics tends to claim itself an objective structure or "spontaneous order," which in fact reminds people of some defining tenets of official socialism in 1960s.¹⁴ Wang's socialist stance helps him identify the fading out of the political in China since the 1990s, but prevents his analysis from further excavating the deeper historical origins and influence of depoliticized politics in China and the rest of the world.

Charles Taylor, another scholar famous for his criticism of Neoliberalism has provided a similar, more thoughtful, analysis through a different line of thinking. On the relationship between politics, science, and our modern worldview in an age of high secularization, Taylor states:

So the new horizontal world in secular time allows for two opposite ways of imagining society. On one side, we become capable of imagining new free,

Wang Hui, *qu zheng zhi hua de zheng zhi*, 1.

¹⁴ Wang Hui, *qu zheng zhi hua de zheng zhi*, 37-40.

horizontal modes of collective agency, and hence of entering into and creating such agencies because they are now in our repertoire. On the other, we become capable of objectifying society as a system of norm-independent processes, in some ways analogous to those in nature. On the one hand, society is a field of common agency on the other a terrain to be mapped, synoptically represented, analyzed, perhaps preparatory to being acted on from the outside by enlightened administrators.

Central to this is the idea that the political is limited by the extrapolitical, by different domains of life that have their own integrity and purpose. These include but aren't exhausted by the economic. It is thus built in to the modern social imaginary that it allows us to conceive of society in extrapolitical forms, not just through the science that came to be called political economy, but also through the various facets of what we have come to call sociology. The very meaning of society in its modern sense points us to this entity which can be grasped and studied in various ways, of which the political is only one and not necessarily the most fundamental.¹⁵

By Taylor's analysis, both the logic of our social imaginary and the conceptual framework of politics generated by modernity require a politics presumed to be defined and driven by some extrapolitical elements. This can, and should only, be understood as objective facts through an epistemological process of objectification that is very similar, if not entirely identical to, what is applied in natural science. In so doing, politics imagined by modern people cannot be a realm in possession of its own rule. Rather, modern politics is, by nature, never exempt from the power of science that inevitably objectifies and simplifies elusive human political behavior into "norm-independent" logical and biological mechanisms that are fully legible and controllable in the hands of "enlightened administrators." Those administrators are enlightened precisely in the sense that they comprehend the scientific knowledge to read and represent the collective agency formed by individual wills, which can only exist in an unprecedentedly free world totally immune to any limitation of arbitrary human authorities and cultural bonds.

Charles Taylor pointedly catches the contradictory nature of this scheme in the secular modern world. On the one hand, objectifying the entire world including its human and political

¹⁵ Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imagination* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 164-165.

realms seems to give people an absolute freedom and equality. Any authority, such as custom, tradition, and personal bondage, which cannot be objectified into scientific facts loses its secret legitimacy as the source of respectable power. On the other, the objectifying impetus of science is unstoppable and unchallengeable, since it forms the prerequisite of individual freedom, agency, and a whole set of corresponding lifestyles. As a result, “[o]ur modern imaginary thus includes not only categories that enable common action, but also categories of process and classification that happen or have their effects behind the backs of the agents.” These (scientific and therefore economic) categories of process and classification themselves form a collective agency, overriding and pushing individual free wills into “census categories in relation to ethnicity, language, income level, or entitlements of the welfare system.”¹⁶ In a word, the entirety of human reality and nature must be objectified. The new human assumption, in turn, undergirds the imperative behind intellectual ramifications such as political economy, sociology, and the broad social sciences that bulldoze all non-scientific obstacles in our mind and life, so as to turn people into “one dimensional men” who live in a “disenchanted” world and follow nothing but the rule of science.¹⁷

As such, through the lens of science, natural and social alike, human beings must be conceptualized into identical, atomized, highly intelligent bipeds that have similar reasonings, motives and behavioral patterns.¹⁸ This fundamental human nature assumption forms the base of what political philosopher Michael Oakeshott called “the rationalism in politics.” Simply put, the modern imagination of human beings makes it possible for people to see politics as a neutral

¹⁶ Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imagination*, 165.

¹⁷ Herbert Marcuse, *One-dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (London: Routledge, 1964). Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002).

¹⁸ James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, *Rediscovering Institution: the Organizational Basis of Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 1989), 4.

realm in which individuals with similar rationality participate in a methodologically apolitical process of reasoning that can lead, without too much difficulty, to the best fulfillment of some consensual political goals.¹⁹ Thus politics can be reduced to numerous “rationality projects,” which have no essential difference from individual experiments in the natural sciences.²⁰ As perfectly summarized by political philosopher Sir Bernard Crick, the modern understanding of politics means “politics can and should be reduced to science.”²¹ Nonetheless, before it can be analyzed and reduced to scientific fact, its frequent uncertainty and irrationality means that “[p]olitics is, to so many social scientists, a kind of disease.”²² In consequence, in most modern discourses politics is largely depicted as a pathological phenomenon, full of irrational conflicts and debates that, in fact, can be treated once some of the more fundamental problems that disguise unsolvable conflicting interests and faiths are identified. Politics itself, especially its “irrational” human dimensions, is basically meaningless. Treating political problems seriously can only make things worse because the cruxes of these problems are simply not in the political domain. The cure inevitably comes from outside, from science that provides the only constant and infallible antidote of rationalization to inhibit the chaos and corruption caused by human interventions.

As American political philosopher Michael Sandel has explicated, the modern understanding of politics actually contains an unexamined philosophical assumption founded by Emmanuel Kant that “the right is prior to the good”. In other words, the right of free choice is the highest moral principle and political goal that overrules any other moral obligations. The legitimacy of politics therefore lies in its ability to allow a “choosing self” to maintain their right

¹⁹ Michael Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (New York: Basic Books Pub. Co. 1962), 95.

²⁰ Deborah Stone, *Policy Paradox: the Art of Political Decision Making* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 7.

²¹ Bernard Crick, *In Defence of Politics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 92.

²² Bernard Crick, *In Defence of Politics*, 96.

of choosing. However, choosing per se is a concept devoid of any moral meaning. Kant's philosophy actually paves the way for those "objectified" human desires to enter and occupy the center of politics, since the only moral principle that stays there is an empty freedom of choice.²³ One may ask if the goals of choosing selves are incompatible, as they often will be, then is there not still a role for politics? Indeed, objectified selves still needed to be disciplined by political arrangements. For this reason, the politics regulating conflicting choosing selves always asserts itself regardless of any religious or ideological promise. Its existence only guarantees the maximum freedom of individual. In this sense, it seems really apolitical. However, at the same time, this politics has already been forced to limit itself from those "non objective" human dimensions, including some religious taboos and cultural commitments to certain gender roles. This conscious self-limitation of the "political" is definitely political.

In this regard, modern political imagination is definitely not value free. Behind its universal and objective disguise there is always a strong political commitment to the ultimate objective and scientific political order, and a tendency to highlight the agency of rational human beings and downplay the influence of historical heritage on human behavior. In other words, the modern conceptual framework of politics has a clear political preference and consequence. A classic expression of this attitude can be founded in the "preventative politics" envisioned by famous American political scientist Harold Lasswell (1902-1978):

The ideal of a politics of prevention is to obviate conflict by the definite reduction of the tension level of society by effective methods, of which discussion will be but one.²⁴

For Lasswell, all those human bargains, compromises, and conflicts in politics can and should eventually be ended or reduced by the general application of scientific methods in a globally

²³ Michael Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 11-13.

²⁴ Harold Lasswell's words are quoted from Bernard Crick, *In Defence of Politics*, 96.

prevail “techno-scientific culture.” Lasswell’s vision of politics is by no means unique. In fact, the idea of such a techno-scientific political imagination has long held purchase.

Similarly, the social sciences and the knowledge system related to the modern political imagination, especially its positivism, are objective only when all the assumptions about human nature, such as the undoubted moral priority of choosing self, upon which social science is founded, are accepted as objective. The reality that social sciences depict is by no means the undistorted existence. Theodore Adorno has polemically argued that the objectivity valued by empirical social sciences, the major instrument of techno-scientific modernity to understand and depict the human world, is not the objectivity of reality but the pretence of value:

The pretence is made to examine an object by means of an instrument of research, which through its own formulation, decides what the object is; in other words, we are faced with a simple circle. The gesture of scientific honesty, which refuses to work with concepts that are not clear and unambiguous, becomes the excuse for superimposing the self-satisfied research enterprise over what is investigated.²⁵

By claiming all human dimensions that are unsuitable for the objectified measurement “accidentals,” Adorno argues that techno-scientific modernity consolidates a world which duly functions according to totally expectable statistical rules of exchange and administration.

Furthermore, the political reality generated and framed by objectifying power of science is, in theory, equally understandable for everyone who has the “universal” form of reason to know and who can analyze the “universal” objective principles behind the variegated human activities. Politics, thus, can no longer be defined, monopolized, and directed by a few privileged sages

²⁵ Theodor W. Adorno, Hans Albert, Jurgen Habermas, Karl R. Popper, translated by Glyn Adey and David Frisby, *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1977), 72. In the same book, Karl Popper defends the objectivity of empirical research. However, his defense actually acknowledges that objectivity is an agreement formed in the process of politics and history. He just wants to argue that the political and human dimensions form exactly the reason researchers should respect and pursue this objectivity in their effort to build a science following collective norms and standards. See *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology*, 95-96.

who own some esoteric wisdom or special characteristics that are not widely shared and therefore acknowledged by ordinary people. The techno-scientific politics requires objective facts and causal relations knowable for objectified minds.²⁶ It infers that political thought, which requires that everyone act as they would behind a “veil of ignorance” (which prevents one from knowing one’s own accidental characteristics, and thus from irrationally choosing to favor them) has a similar portfolio of human needs and can form a political unanimity of basic human rights and equality.²⁷ It inevitably leads to the necessity of mass political participation since the masses are re-imagined to be innately programmed to possess the rational ability to understand objectified political facts and make political judgment upon them. The masses, in turn, further objectify politics with their denial of the elitist political virtuosity and their quest for certain, or even quantized, political knowledge that is legible and examinable for the scientific-minded public. Science empowers masses to doubt anything in politics, including human reality, that cannot be analyzed according to scientific methods. Simultaneously, everything that is scrutable and understandable for an experienced statesman is considered to be equally, if not more, comprehensible for a three-year-old math genius who has already mastered calculus. The consequence, arguably, is the marginalization of elite culture and non-scientific understanding of human beings. The “mass-man,” as named by Spanish philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset,

²⁶ Yaron Izrahi, “Science and the Political Imagination in Contemporary Democracies,” in Sheila Jasonoff ed. *States of Knowledge* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 255-258.

²⁷ The veil of ignorance is first proposed by American political philosopher John Rawls who attempts to prove that people will agree upon some egalitarian political agenda rather than the maximum of individual freedom when they are in the veil of ignorance and have no idea whether the talent and fortune they have advantage or disadvantage them in a political order that guarantees only individual freedom but not basic economic and opportunistic equality. See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999). John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: a Restatement* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 2001). The question is: Rawls assumes some commonly shared rationality that guides everyone to prefer some unique form of justice over similar unique freedom. See John Gray, *Two Faces of Liberalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000). For the purpose of the current research, John Rawls’ thought is a typical example of the techno-scientific politics that objectifies human needs.

dominates modern politics with the technical reason that highlights some “natural” needs but denies humanistic pursuit:

And now it turns out that the actual scientific man is the prototype of the mass-man. Not by chance, not through the individual failings of each particular man of science, but because science itself-the root of our civilisation-automatically converts him into mass-man, makes of him a primitive, a modern barbarian.²⁸

One does not need to agree with Gasset’s strong condemnation of mass politics; suffice to say that techno-scientific politics involves not only the objectification of social facts, but also a scientization/atomization of human nature that desanctifies the supremacy and effect of high elite humanistic practice in politics.

The political consequence of techno-scientific politics is far more profound than the transformation of a conceptual framework that allows mass participation. As a matter of fact, there are some very concrete, very large, interests involved. History has proven that the adoption of techno-scientific framework can cause tremendous disturbance to the original political and cultural order. Timothy Mitchell’s research on modern Egypt, for example, convincingly demonstrates how seemingly objective political economic discourse and practice turned Egyptian society into an ahistorical and apolitical virgin land suitable for the exploitation of imperialist powers. Egypt, despite its long history and political heritage, is depicted by many Western social scientists as a place having no real changes in its stagnant “natural agricultural economy” and numerous essentially similar dynastic circles.²⁹ David Arnold’s work on India also indicates that a political consequence of accepting techno-scientific culture is that it “would always confine Indians to a state of tutelage and subordination, always have them one step behind, second-best

²⁸ Jose Ortega Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993), 77.

²⁹ Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). The book’s introduction and first chapter are especially pertinent to the discussion of techno-scientific politics.

and imperfect copies of a Western ideal.”³⁰ To sum up, techno-scientific modernity and its understanding of politics is not only a unique Kantian philosophical position and a set of cultural preferences generated in a Western context, but also a political excuse for imperialism and/or capitalism to legitimize their dismissal of indigenous cultural and political reality in order to clear an reality open for all “developmental” programs under the name of science and liberation of human beings.³¹

Section Three: Techno-scientific Political Imagination in Modern Chinese Politics Studies

The depoliticized politics observed by Wang Hui is not simply the consequence of Neoliberalism’s recent victory. The whole modern political imaginary dictates the depoliticization of politics through the objectifying power of science. Well before the passions of revolution became exhausted in the post 1960 era, a depoliticized politics was already present. More precisely, the appearance of socialist revolution itself squarely stands as evidence of depoliticized politics. Socialist revolution, which highlights the universal scientific truth of historical materialism and denies the legitimacy of traditional cultural and political practices, is nothing but the corollary of objectification of the entire human political reality.³² It is especially fitting to describe Wang Hui’s short twentieth century in China as an age of techno-scientific

³⁰ David Arnold, *New Cambridge History of India* volume 3, part 5: Science, Technology, and Medicine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 16, quoted from Sean Hsiang-lin Lei, *Neither Donkey nor Horse: Medicine in the Struggle over China’s Modernity* (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 2014), 12.

³¹ The Western religious impetus behind ideals of techno-scientific modernity is a familiar theme in scholarship on subject. Some scholars have found in it a new version of Saint Augustine’s Heavenly City built with “more up-to-date materials.” Zeev Sternhell, David Maisel trans, *The Anti-Enlightenment Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 425.

³² Certainly, later socialist intellectuals have been highly aware of the depoliticizing tendency in early socialism and undergirded the socialist tradition with a much higher political awareness. See Ernesto Laclau, *The Rhetorical Foundations of Society* (London, Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2014).

politics in which science and its objectifying power was seen as the ultimate source of political authority.

At any rate, Wang Hui is correct in pointing out that depoliticized politics, or techno-scientific politics, has become ever more hegemonic in China and the entire world during the last twenty years. With the opening up of China, and the unprecedented growth of its economy, the Western derived techno-scientific modernity has rapidly exerted an influence over the Chinese people to an extent that was unimaginable pre-1949. Nowadays, it does not seem improper to assert that the techno-scientific understanding of politics has become a mainstream perspective, shared by most Chinese people who live in cities or who have access to the mainstream media and the Internet. In this situation, the techno-scientific conceptual framework is quite rightly [or perhaps “unsurprisingly”] taken for granted by many scholars who study modern Chinese politics and its history. After all, with hindsight, contemporary researchers of China studies are presented with ever-stronger reasons to understand modern Chinese politics through its many characteristics of techno-scientific modernity. Small wonder, then, that the explanatory framework first adopted by first generation Western China study scholars remains authoritative, if often unconsciously so, by today’s researchers in the West and China.

For example, Modern Chinese political history as a subfield within the entire corpus of modern Chinese political studies does not have any immunity against the enduring hegemonic influence of understanding politics in a techno-scientific way. In a broader sense, modern Chinese political history provides a typical case to see the symptoms caused by techno-scientific modernity. From the very beginning, scholars have considered politics to be an objectified realm, in which the forces of rationality and science are omniscient and dominate the minds and behaviors of political participants, whose cultural perspectives are but secondary private

preferences that are either marginalized or that adjust to objective socio/economic/political conditions. Joseph R. Levenson's *Confucian China and its Modern Fate* remains the most representative work that follows the techno-scientific paradigm and inscribes it for subsequent researchers. Levenson's masterpiece, with his erudite and panoramic understanding of Chinese culture and history, contains many profound analyses. From time to time, readers can sense a sincere sympathy and affection in Levenson's discussions of Confucianism. Be that as it may, his core argument is based on a Weberian, and therefore modern, analysis of the Confucian teaching "a cultured man is not a tool" (*Jun zi bu qi* 君子不器), which inevitably leads to Levenson endorsing the following perspective:

The prestige of office depended on that fact. The scholar's belle-lettristic cultivation, a type of learning divorced from the official tasks for which it qualified him, was essential—not to performance of official functions with technical efficiency (there it was rather inhibiting), but to the cultural celebration of those functions.³³

In the original Chinese classic context, the teaching "a cultured man is not a tool" meant that a princely man who pursues the ultimate meaning of the heaven should not limit himself to be merely useful for a specific task. It is, essentially, a reminder that a man with a higher spiritual pursuit should not be satisfied with being a specialist who has no big picture of the entire human reality. Certainly, one can infer from this that ancient Confucians did not possess the ideals of professionalism and professionalization. It is also true that they would especially disagree with seeing knowledge and the skill of rule as a profession in terms of an occupational career in modern society. However, the teaching by no means opposes the better comprehension of expertise, whether in politics or other realms. The classic learning per se was viewed by pre-modern Chinese learned people as, by nature, the learning of the kingly officials (*Wang guan zhi*

³³ Max Weber, trans. Hans H. Gerth, *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism* (Urbana, Illinois: The Free Press, 1951), 160. Joseph R. Levenson, *Confucian China and its Modern Fate* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 16.

xue 王官之學), which has everything to do with practical governance. However, for Weber, whose prime concern was why the unstoppable rationalization of the entire human world first originated in the West, the generalist Confucian idea together with the premature but only “semi-rationalized” Chinese bureaucracy only represented an example of how irrational literary cultural tastes inhibited fully fledged rational modernity. What Weber and Levenson both take for granted is the content of rationalization in politics. In their modern conceptual framework, this can only mean scientific analyses and technical solutions to objectified human political needs and behavior. They are compelled to objectify politics into a realm that is only responsive to similar techno-scientific judgments and actions that form the so-called profession. Under the circumstances, if the moral and humanistic teaching in Chinese classic education can not be “interpreted” into some psychological mechanism that is supposed to be really functional in scientized and materialized human minds, it is nothing but irrelevant and useless literature.

This techno-scientific conceptualization of politics reaches far beyond Levenson’s generation and, indeed, beyond the American academic community. Time and again, the Weberian approach, as political scientist Julia Strauss names it, remains a self-evident assumption in many must-read works.³⁴ Through the lens of Weberian scholars, the core issue of modern Chinese politics is in fact synonymous with the rationalization of government or more concretely “the process by which state actors make a state organization grow in size, extend its reach, and increase its functions.”³⁵ For most scholars, modernity in politics means a series of

³⁴ Julia C. Strauss and Donal B. Cruise O’Brien ed., *Staging Politics: Power and Performance in Asia and Africa* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2007), 1.

³⁵ Elizabeth Remick, *Building Local States: China during the Republican and Post-Mao Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2004), 12.

“institutional breakthrough[s],” whereby government and politics is rationalized and made more efficient.³⁶

This research focus has helped historians focus their attention on the steady development of modern bureaucracy in both central and local governments, and revise the previous standpoint that the Chinese states in the late 19th and early 20th century had achieved little in modern state building. Many works based on the Weberian approach have indicated a lasting and salient political development through the entirety of modern Chinese history. A bundle of modern Chinese state-building literature has tended to exclusively focus on rationalization of state institutions from central to local governments in order to prove the presence or absence of techno-scientific modernity in Chinese politics. Some scholars have noticed that even against an unstable political environment, some rationalized institutions, such as highly efficient salt tax collection and management, took root in the Chinese government. Julia Strauss’ works on Republican Weberian institutional reforms are representative of this standpoint. Strauss is interested in how a “strong” Western institution, efficient and incorruptible, could be maintained in the “weak” Chinese polity. Her research indicates that the efficiency of Western institutes and institutions were recognized by Chinese political elites, who respected the authority of Western derived techno-scientific requirements and knew that their own interests were best served when they kept their dirty hands off these modern political oases. Her argument implies that the rationality and efficiency of techno-scientific modernity functioned most perfectly without human, and especially without Chinese, meddling. Indigenous human factors were irrelevant, if not negative, to the formation of political modernity in China. The appearance of techno-scientific modernity is taken for granted as an indication of progress. The human intentions, the

³⁶ Julia C. Strauss, “The Evolution of Republican Government,” in *Reappraising Republican China*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 81–85.

costs needed to sustain those advanced political enclaves, and whether or not these modern institutions also generated problems that prevented other more promising political agendas, are concerns that are largely excluded from the vision of techno-scientific politics.³⁷

To be fair, in her later works, Julia Strauss is highly aware of the limitations of the Weberian approach, and focuses more on the role of Chinese political practices in the state-building process. For instance, she keenly catches two different trends within the assumptions of proper state-building approaches that were embodied in various training (*xunlian*) programs held by the Nationalist regime. However, while recognizing the regime's emphasis on the indoctrination of correct moral and ideological commitments, Strauss has difficulty seeing the inner connection between moral cultivation and technical training, and it is the latter she considers to be directly relevant to the enhancement of the state's capacity. Apparently, the techno-scientific assumption of politics prevents Strauss from further exploring the possibility that the indoctrination of moral and ideological principles could be as practical and necessary as concrete administrative and technical knowledge for the Nationalist regime. Strauss, just like many other scholars, simply takes for granted that moralistic *xunlian* could only be at antithesis to the full rationalization of the training for civil servants and technicians.³⁸ An insightful scholar, Strauss even goes further to admit:

[B]oth Weberian and rational choice approaches have tended to focus attention on what is, at least comparatively speaking, not there, or at best only imperfectly there in terms of impersonal institutions such as a working independent judiciary, functional markets, and good governance' to the veritable exclusion of what is there: the myriad ways in which politicians, state makers and different sectors of society make claims and engage with each other through the kinds of performance that engage the emotions and enable new relationships between state and society to be imagined and acted

³⁷ Julia C. Strauss, *Strong Institutions in Weak Polities: State Building in Republican China, 1927-1940* .

³⁸ Julia C. Strauss, "Strategies of Guomindang Institution Building," in Terry Bodenorn ed., *Defining Modernity: Guomindang Rhetorics of a New China, 1920-1970* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, the University of Michigan, 2002), 216-217.

on.

She undoubtedly notices the misleading effects of techno-scientific political understanding. However, she fails to escape from this powerful conceptual framework when she terms non-modern human political discourses and practices as “politics of performance,” which are distinct from techno-scientific politics and involve only irrational realms outside the institutionalized political process. As a result, the politics of performance is basically deemed to be a third world phenomenon that has little to do with the establishment of orthodox modernity.³⁹ She stops short of asking if the politics of performance is in fact functional within the Weberian bureaucracy, rather than just a performative space outside an allegedly impersonal state machine.

Under this strong influence of rationalist modernity, it is small wonder that techno-scientific politics has become a “fact” and theme for research. The emphasis on rationalization in politics has even made the Qing Empire a much more rational and promising regime, which seemed to already have a new rationality of government in its last years. A kind of modernizing politics seemed to have already been present, rationalizing the relationship between the state and society even before the revolution.⁴⁰ A recent and controversial example can be found in Tong Lam’s highly praised book *A Passion for Facts*. He basically assumes that the promotion of modern ruling techniques like census surveys were undoubtedly a sign of progress in Chinese politics. Because census surveys are an important means of objectifying human reality, its appearance in Chinese politics reflected an effort, whether conscious or unconscious, to adopt modern assumptions of politics. For Tong Lam, this administrative intention to objectify Chinese society is a fact worth celebrating, since the new political imaginary would keep encouraging Chinese people towards a Western style liberal state.

³⁹ Julia C. Strauss and Donal B. Cruise O’Brien ed., *Staging Politics: Power and Performance in Asia and Africa*, 2.

⁴⁰ Tong Lam, *A Passion for Facts: Social Surveys and the Construction of the Chinese Nation-State, 1900-1949* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 62, 73.

However, he never properly explicates why the Qing state, progressive and modern as it seemed, exhausted the support of the Chinese people a mere few years after this great political social experiment was launched. The rosy and optimistic tone of the book gives the impression that Tong Lam is intoxicated by the emergence of techno-scientific modernity in Chinese politics, but he never considers the cost and pain that accompany the pursuit of modern politics, and less still the denial of original indigenous human reality. Nor does he question whether an objectified or disenchanting politics provided feasible solutions to the existing political problems that would not disappear automatically with the introduction of techno-scientific culture.⁴¹ There seems an ingrained bias in Tong Lam's work, as in many other modern Chinese Politics studies, to equate good governance to objectification and scientization of human reality, institutional rationalization, and Western derived governmental practices. Behind this bias is the faith that

⁴¹ Tong Lam uses Foucault's biopolitics to describe the newly introduced political pattern and argues that this biopolitics was the first step to the ultimate fulfillment of "liberal constitutional order" in China. In a sense, he is right. Foucault does see liberal constitutionalism, just like Fascism, as a corollary and integral part of the inescapable control caused by the matrix of modernity. It is noteworthy that Tong Lam shares with many scholars who unreservedly accept techno-scientific assumption of politics a common tendency to neglect the underlying pessimistic or even disapproving tone in Max Weber's rationalization and Michel Foucault's biopolitics. While both Weber and Foucault have a much dimmer perspective of modernity and its future, Tong Lam and other like minded scholars almost entirely embrace Weber and Foucault's very alarming observation with full optimism. Tong Lam, *A Passion for Facts: Social Surveys and the Construction of the Chinese Nation-State, 1900-1949*, 66. In addition, Tong Lam's perspective in many ways echoes Francis Fukuyama who believes that history has been ended in the ultimate victory of liberal democratic ideology. Many scholars have criticized Fukuyama's statement from theoretical and empirical aspects. But, despite all problems and mistakes in Fukuyama's book, he is right in revealing the necessary relationship between the techno-scientific modernity and a specific form of human being, the last man. Fukuyama borrows the term "the last man" from Nietzsche but significantly redefines it. What Nietzsche had correctly foreseen is actually that the objectifying/materializing logic of techno-scientific modernity, would eventually turn all human beings into vulgar and hedonic last men. While admitting the threat of materialism and consumerism to liberal democracy, Fukuyama argues that liberal democracy is still most capable of satisfying the "real need" of last men, honor and recognition. As Derrida has pointedly pointed out, this version of last men and their noble needs are largely the wishful brainchild of Fukuyama's ideological faith in democracy. Consciously or unconsciously, Fukuyama does notice the subtle but profound connection between the modern drive of objectifying human beings and democracy. Democracy requires an objectified society and politics that can be understood and operated by equal ordinary individuals rather than a few extraordinary sages. In this sense, the introduction of techno-scientific culture into politics does mean a starting point of a long or short democratization. See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992), Chapter 28. Jacques Derrida, trans. Peggy Kamuf, *Specters of Marx: the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (New York: Routledge, 2006), chapter two.

technical and rational measures alone count for effective governance in a modern state. In other words, his focus remains “the importance of interrogating the rise of social scientific statecraft and techno-scientific reasoning in the first half of the twentieth century.”⁴² Demonstrating this kind of statecraft, on the one hand, definitely enriches our understanding of a colonial modernity in which Chinese agents were by no means passive recipients of Western derived modernity.⁴³ On the other hand, however, by revealing how actively the Chinese state and elites dedicated themselves to the formation of rationalist modernity with Chinese materials and characteristics, the hegemony of techno-scientific culture is unproblematized and objectified. The non-scientific political and human statecraft is still excluded by some specific “passion” for “facts,” even though some researchers are indeed aware that science is only one way to construct our understanding of the world and its history.⁴⁴

In general, few researchers raise doubts as to whether objectification in the first place is an irrational preference rather than calculated choice, not to mention the possibility that a scientifically rational choice can cause irrational consequences. Such an unexamined belief in unbounded and atemporal rationality, which has the same efficacy anywhere regardless of concrete context and the specific abilities of actors to gather information and form judgments, makes it hard for modern researchers to imagine the dialectical relation between rationality and irrationality. To take the case in Tong Lam’s book, for example, logically and theoretically speaking a surveyor of a modern census might be inculcated with new concepts of social facts and authenticity, and thus become the missionary of modern governmentality. In actuality, a short-term trained and underpaid casual surveyor might only bear and spread the absurdity of an

⁴² Tong Lam, *A Passion for Facts: Social Surveys and the Construction of the Chinese Nation-State, 1900-1949*, 6.

⁴³ On the co-making of modernity in China, see Hans van de Ven, *Breaking with the Past: the Maritime Custom Service and the Global Origins of Modernity in China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

⁴⁴ Tong Lam, *A Passion for Facts: Social Surveys and the Construction of the Chinese Nation-State, 1900-1949*, 13-14.

ill-prepared policy. The data collected in this way could therefore simply enhance the old impression of an inert state and an unruly population, and by no means usher in a new social imagination to the state and society. Modern understandings and techniques of politics, however objective and scientific though they may seem, guarantees no spontaneous rationalization of reality. In this situation, insisting on the modern political imagination and expecting its theoretical outcomes in history can only be a conceptual bias, which prevents other more meaningful themes - such as how modern governmentality was discredited by self conscious political mobilization of local society - from being explored. Be that as it may, the hegemony of techno-scientific modernity has already generated an increasingly strong tendency to view the last decade of the Qing Empire as a progressive era of modern state building. Researchers seek all signs of modernity in the empire with great ardor, and argue that it would have become a successful modern nation state had it not been overthrown by the 1911 revolution.⁴⁵

The hegemonic power of the techno-scientific political imagination is such that even those who have clear intentions to question its advisability tend to reinterpret its basic assumptions at absent-minded moments. Prasenjit Duara's works demonstrate how overwhelming this hegemony is. His narratives, on the one hand, aptly demonstrate the basic mechanism and predicament of modern, objectified, state building in a pre-modern society. The efforts of the state to objectify and penetrate the society were often frustrated by the "cultural nexus" which kept the society too organic, nepotistic, and irrational for the state to administer. The involution of state can be seen as the price of distorted rationalization caused by irrational social entities such as the predatory brokers. On the other, Duara can only imagine a typified modern confrontation between a universal administrative state and a disenchanting "pre-modern" society

⁴⁵ The latest fruition of this literature see Stephen Halsey, *Quest for Power: European Imperialism and the making of Chinese Statecraft* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2015).

where human nature had already been objectified. There is no room for politics, at least not for “non-modern” politics, which has largely been reduced to the downward organizational penetration of the state into the grass root levels of society. In this apolitical politics, the political goals and legitimacy of individual regimes in the area he researches are completely unimportant, since all regimes in the objectified politics were similar “states,” having only universally objective geopolitical concerns, such as the ability to get resources from the society. There could not be other ways to imagine the nature of state and its interaction with a people whose cultural nexus is supposed to be economic and rational in essence. As a result, one only sees the “universal” and “objective” outcome of techno-scientific modernity and its politics. No real history is found in China.⁴⁶

The limitations of techno-scientific political understandings can even be found in Duara’s postmodernist historiography. Certainly, Duara has every right to assert that the modern nation state should not be the only basis on which researchers analyze modern Chinese history. He correctly points out that the nation state as a vehicle of modernity is basically generated in a specific European context. To further explicate his statement, Duara demonstrates that provincial autonomy and *Manchuguo* are noteworthy topics in which new historical agencies and storylines can be found. However, Duara’s resorting to this alternative research focus exposes the crux of the problem: history does not need to be rescued from nation states as much as from the modern

⁴⁶ It may be true that cultural nexus in North China did not have too much cultural and ideological potential to generate non-modern resources and facts considering the relative underdevelopment of cultured elitism there. However, the involution of state has been proven a concept with only regional validity. Case studies in other areas indicate that the state/society relation in Central and South China tended to be more cooperative because of much more active and strong elitism. In other words, cultural nexus in other places was not so objectified as Duara depicts. One needs to consider that the data on which Duara relies to do his research were generated by Japanese social scientists who might be sympathetic with Chinese peasants but were trained to objectify Chinese society. Thus, the Chinese society and cultural nexus described by *Mantetsu* Japanese scholars was quite “rational.” See Prasenjit Duara, *Culture, Power, and the State: Rural North China, 1900-1942*. About the revision of involution, see Elizabeth Remick, *Building Local States*. About how Japanese scholars objectified China, see Stefan Tanaka, *Japan’s Orient: Rendering Pasts into History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 19-20.

political imagination. As Chinese scholar Li Meng (李猛) incisively points out, Duara's "bifurcated history" is limited in its range of elite narratives. Those elites may have different views, but their stories all share similar assumptions with the hegemonic power structure. For example, because of the ingrained techno-scientific political imagination, those provinces described by Duara as the new historical agents are basically just smaller nation states that still possess objectified political logic, and whose purposes are little different from the united nation state.⁴⁷

By the same token, in his book dealing with *Manchuguo*, Duara puts forward the concept of "cultural authenticity" to frame the non-Western derived political modernity, or what he calls "East Asian modern." Highly aware of the problems associated with objectifying the process of new imperium creation into Weberian state building, Duara emphasizes that *Manchuguo* was not a copy of a Western modern state or colony. It was a kind of modern empire that had its own civilizational discourses rooted in Eastern, rather than objectified Western, state ideology. While his efforts to take the discursive expressions promoted by the Japanese officials seriously is central to the broader project to provincialize the modern political imagination, Duara's cultural authenticity ultimately remains tainted with the color of objectification. He discusses all cultural dimensions only on a discursive level, and is largely dismissive of their varied efficacies both in human minds and on practical levels. Duara is determined to reveal the discursive possibilities suppressed by mainstream nationalist narratives. In this regard, his argument can only make sense when he proves that some discourses were (more) authentic for some social groups in unobjectifiable ways, even though the mainstream national communities and the objectified political imagination denied them. However, because he still accepts the objectified and

⁴⁷ Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995). Li Meng, "Zheng jiu shei de li shi?" (Rescuing Whose History?) *Er shi yi shi ji* (*The Twenty First Century*) 10, (1998).

disenchanted basis of human nature, which has provided these discourses with a “rational” role in politics, Duara cannot help but objectify all cultural discourses into equal spiritual artifices that serve the technical rationale of modern state power. In other words, this assumption of an objectified modern human nature ultimately leads him into a theoretical deadend of depoliticization and decontextualization. If all authenticities are similar objects that can be manufactured according to one’s wishes and independently from any practical political context, then cultural authenticity is just as fake or real as other nationalist and imperialist discourses. Duara seems to simply assume that a cultural authenticity will function spontaneously once it is manufactured. If so, what is the point in highlighting a specific cultural authenticity that is neither more real nor unreal? As a result, his strategy is contradictory: he indifferently objectifies all cultural discourses so as to prove that objectification is not the best way to understand certain dimensions in politics. He depoliticizes such an authenticity as objective entity. The cultural dimensions in his seemingly pluralistic scheme remains value-free bricks, disposable for any objectified regime.

To sum up, cultural authenticity is still an extrapolitical fact generated through the objectification of complicated political and human encounters. Questioning the hegemony of the nation state and dividing larger narratives into smaller ones still adheres to the logic of objectifying and reducing politics into fragmented, atomized, and extrapolitical components - it hardly leads to any real reflection of techno-scientific culture. Those human dimensions that elude scientific scrutiny cannot be rescued in this conceptual framework from the modernity which Duara seeks to challenge.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ The concept of cultural authenticity has the huge potential to question the dominant conceptual structure which generates a hegemonic reality. It at least implies that there were some cultural dimensions playing as important and real as those colonial/imperialist/nationalist concerns in forming the identity of *Manchuguo*. However, to highlight this theoretical potential, Duara consciously deemphasizes the techno-scientific political background in

Finally, it would be a mistake to assume that the paradigm of techno-scientific politics is only limited to studies of state building and governmental politics. As a matter of fact, techno-scientific politics is also the underlying theme in many works dealing with the revolution in modern China. Despite the fact that the socialist ideology and the intermittent “state of exception” that prevailed during the campaign often defy the conceptual framework of rationalization, and focus attention on the objectified extrapolitical, many researchers still try to find signs of techno-scientific politics in revolutionary and socialist China. The continuity across 1911 and 1949 is, after all, a techno-scientific political tradition.⁴⁹ Moreover, revolution is often analyzed against the background of an objectified, faceless, state and its techno-scientific politics.⁵⁰ As such, the techno-scientific political modernity remains intact. Naturally, there is an expectation that Chinese politics should return to the track of rationalist modernity after it bids farewell to the revolution. Neo-traditionalism, for example, is used by Andrew Walder to describe how personal patronage consolidates formal authority. This concept does bring human dimensions back to objectified modern Chinese politics, and questions a universal modernity. However, Walder does not explicate whether neo-traditionalism is a unique Chinese

which a few Japanese, rather than ordinary people, coined the cultural authenticity. Accordingly, the cultural authenticity remains largely a discursive possibility deprived of its political dimension that is meant to be unable to bring back the human complexity ignored by techno-scientific political understanding. Despite Duara’s sophisticated narratives, one is still compelled to ask: in what sense, the cultural discourse of *Manchuguo* was authentic? Is it authentic because some Japanese officials who designed it believed it? If so, is it less authentic than mainstream narratives or simply equally true? At last, Duara cannot shy from political claims. To equate a cultural discourse held by only a few Japanese officers to a national narrative is a political stance. See Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern* (Lanham; Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003). Also see Yung-fa Chen’s very thorough and critical review in *Bulletin of the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica* 44 (2004), 177-194.

⁴⁹ For a critique, see Joseph Esherick, “Deconstructing the Construction of the Party-state: Gulin County in the Shaan-Gan-Ning Border Region,” *China Quarterly* 140 (1994). Also see Esherick, “Ten Theses on the Chinese Revolution,” in Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom ed., *Twentieth-Century China: New Approaches* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003).

⁵⁰ Ralph A. Thaxton, *Salt of the Earth: The Political Origins of Peasant Protest and Communist Revolution in China*. (Berkeley: University of California Press. 1997).

phenomenon, or indispensable for rationalist modernity that is allegedly predominant in a no more traditional West.⁵¹

All in all, while undeniable progress has been made in the exploration of modern Chinese politics, the techno-scientific conceptual framework nonetheless continues to prevent scholars from studying long-neglected but critical topics. Sometimes, this can be very misleading. Despite its disguise of universalism and objectivity, modern understandings of politics are not as norm-independent as it seems. As many scholars have pointed out, a totally objectified, disenchanted and economized world best serves the needs of capital and its free circulation.⁵² In essence, the “emancipating reason” of techno-scientific modernity is incompatible with customary ethics and politics.⁵³ Therefore, the application of the modern political imaginary unavoidably highlights the possibility and desirability of Western, liberal, and capitalistic agendas while presumptively deemphasizing the role of those non-modern or pre-modern political discourses and practices. The modern assumptions in Levenson’s aforementioned work has led him (and subsequent scholars) to underestimate the “practicality” of Chinese classic education and the whole body of statecraft literature that developed from these classics. All these tell us: it is high time to rescue Chinese politics studies from the hegemony of the techno-scientific political imagination. From this position of understanding, the next question is: how and what to study in modern Chinese politics?

The conceptual and ideological limitations of the modern political imagination have been exposed above. The next issue is to discuss the alternative conceptual frameworks capable of

⁵¹ See Andrew Walder, *Communist Neo-traditionalism: Work and Authority in Chinese Industry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). Similar perspective also see Lin Nan, “Local Market Socialism: Local Cooperation in Action in Rural China,” *Theory and Society* 24 (1995).

⁵² Michel Foucault, trans. Alan Sheridan, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Random House, 1979), 221.

⁵³ Samir Amin, trans. Russell Moore and James Membrez, *Eurocentrism: Modernity, Religion, and Democracy A Critique of Eurocentrism and Culturalism*, (New York, Monthly Review Press, 2009), 14.

replacing techno-scientific ways to understand politics. Recent scholarship in science, technology studies, and anthropology, has profoundly questioned the depoliticized and pure objectivity as alleged by techno-scientific modernity. The reintroduction of political and human dimensions have sought to refresh people's understanding of politics and its relationship with science. Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer unveil the social and political context in which modern science became independent from natural philosophy, and limited in a realm only germane to pure "objective" "facts." In the debate between Thomas Hobbes and Robert Boyle over the concept of vacuum, a scientific "truth" was eventually confirmed only after a series of application of social techniques that had everything to do with righteous political concerns.⁵⁴ Bruno Latour's milestone research provocatively reveals how scientific facts and its objectiveness are actually generated in a series of calculated political arrangements, institutions, and human interventions. They are hybrids of modern and non-modern components, if the defining characteristic of science as modernity is its human-independent objectivity. The absolute objectivity of science is less a reality than a metaphor similar to the constitutional division between judiciary and executive branches of government that only exists in theory, rather than in practice.⁵⁵ Seen from this perspective, the clear cut between fact and value, political and extrapolitical, is never a truth to science and politics. Defining and confirming scientific objectivity, in this sense, has always been a political issue. As Hobbes tried to do in order to prevent the British civil war, sometimes, it is necessary and legitimate in politics to give higher priority to the stability of polity over the objective impositions of science.

⁵⁴ Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

⁵⁵ Bruno Latour also points out that the humanism of modernity is actually based on a "nonhumanity" that is created to be a objective world, See Bruno Latour, trans Catherine Porter, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993), 4-6, 13-14.

On the concept of politics, anthropologist Marshall Salins convincingly demonstrates that the death of Captain Cook at the hands of Hawaiian aboriginals reflects not so much the greed of indigenous savages as the encounter of profoundly different understanding of politics. While Captain Cook understood politics as an objectified realm dominated by the logic of secular interest and power, Hawaiians' politics had everything to do with the cosmic order and the struggle between the gods and human beings. Captain Cook, who was driven by the desire formed in his own culture to acquire local wealth, should not be seen as more rational than the Hawaiian warriors, who were determined to prevent the human world from being seized and sabotaged by the revengeful "white god" of their legendary record.⁵⁶ Indian scholar Partha Chatterjee also uses "political society" to replace "civil society" as the proper concept to comprehend those informal but critical political negotiations and mobilizations launched by subaltern people whose political interests and rationality tend to be dismissed and denigrated in the modern imagination of civil society. His emphasis on the political exposes the depoliticized nature of the techno-scientific modernity and its liberal democratic polity in which people who have no capital are actually victimized by the polite and rational discussion in the public sphere.⁵⁷

The new scholarship of philosophy has also challenged the reliability and desirability of scientific way of knowing and reasoning. To begin with, the epistemological foundation of the techno-scientific modernity and politics is assumed to be an absolute dichotomy between subject and object. Whether in its Franco-Kantian or Anglo-Saxon version, knowing seems always a norm-independent process through which unbiased rational subjects can get at universal objective understandings. This epistemological dichotomy leads to the similar value/fact

⁵⁶ Marshall Salins, *Islands of History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), 104-134.

⁵⁷ Partha Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 4-7,

dichotomy, which in turn paves the way for the superiority of fact over value. A confirmed fact or objective rule, thus, can overrule all value-charged “preferences” because it has nothing to do with human bias.⁵⁸ However, as the latest philosophical thinking has indicated, this dichotomy is invalid because the language with which human beings organize and form subjectivity and objective facts is neither value free nor universal. In other words, human beings can only think in a given cultural setting, formed by specific human conditions. Facts perceived in this cultural setting are norm-dependent. According to this philosophical finding, science and the objectivity it claims by definition bear a specific set of value and cultural preferences, such as a penchant for a certain type of simplicity and certainty, and these originated in the West.⁵⁹ Therefore, the fact/value dichotomy upon which the objectivity of techno-scientific culture is based is unwarranted. All facts are value charged. Accordingly, science cannot be the only and universally valid way to understand all realms in all societies. The scientific objectification of human and social reality is certainly not the only legitimate approach towards knowing politics in the non-Western world like China, where the fact/value dichotomy was never widely accepted and other cultural preferences thrived. In addition, the absolute objectivity claimed by science is also severely questioned by cognitive psychologists and philosophers, who find that knowing is a matter of degree rather than an certain place one can reach. In other words, people need other, non-objective, entailments to decide what extent of knowing is valid enough to be called “to know.”⁶⁰

At this point, I move on to discuss alternative conceptual frameworks that revise the idea of a techno-scientific modernity.

⁵⁸ Hilary Putnam, *Ethics Without Ontology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 17-23.

⁵⁹ Hilary Putnam, *The Collapse of Fact/value Dichotomy and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

⁶⁰ Stephen Hetherington ed., *Aspects of Knowing: Epistemological Essays* (Oxford: Elsevier, 2006), 3-4.

Pierre Bourdieu has broken the binary between subject and object structure by developing concepts such as the field, habitus, and theory of practice. Fields are never objective reflections of some socioeconomic and cultural structure. Fields are, by nature, political realms in which understanding and comprehending habitus, the subtle human/political knowledge of how to act and compete properly in a field or fields, is more crucial than objectifying social reality for agents to pursue their interests. Habitus can only be known and practiced by using a kind of practical reason, which is highly contextual and depends heavily on timing compared to theoretical reason, which aims at universal, timeless principles and logical relation. In this sense, Bourdieu's theory is an attempt to bring political facets back towards sociology.⁶¹ For this purpose, in order to understand human messages that are too transitory or unfathomable for theoretical reason to process, he turns to practical reason that takes highly contextual, temporal, but not scientifically analyzable phenomena into account.

Accordingly, by using this sort of practical reason, some unobjectifiable tacit knowledge that involves intimate personal comprehension and commitments can be understood and acquired. This kind of knowledge, as Michael Polanyi maintains, cannot be taught in classrooms or through textbooks. It can only be comprehended through the accumulation of personal experience with the body of knowledge. For example, one just cannot learn sculpture by reading manuals or listening to the lectures of an artisan. For Polanyi, tacit knowledge is more important than theoretical reason and pure logic in forming profound knowing. A classic example of tacit knowledge in science can be found in Barbara McClintock's research of DNA. McClintock was rewarded the Nobel Prize for her path-breaking research, which greatly revised the old theory

⁶¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Sociology in Question* (London: Sage Publication, 1993), 7. Bourdieu, *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984. Bourdieu, *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 208. Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 6-7.

whereby DNA was understood as a unidirectional commander of the entire cell. Unlike other scientists, who first propose a theory that divides a cell into several functional parts and then try to confirm the theory and the specific functional role of each part of cell, McClintock started with observing corn cells as a whole until she could feel a subtle interaction with the cell. At the beginning of her research, she just looked at a corn cell, and could not tell why this way of observation was important and useful. Some untold knowledge that comprehended the totality rather than parts guided her to notice the reciprocal relation and message exchange among DNA and the rest of a cell. No logical reasoning could tell McClintock what to watch in advance.⁶² One can infer from this story that some subtle comprehension, such as transitory human messages in politics, largely belong to the category of tacit rather than scientific knowledge. A blind pursuit of objectification and logical deduction in the realm of tacit knowledge often leads to denial or ignorance of some pivotal information.⁶³

Also questioning the validity of decontextualized unbounded rationality, the psychologist Abraham H. Maslow famously stated: “If all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail.”⁶⁴ The phrase aptly reveals how human perception is always framed by the conceptual tools and the resources that are available to individuals in a given societal context. People who are “installed” with techno-scientific modernity and its political understanding are not immune to this psychological limitation. Once people are involved in modern politics, they are compelled to only be sensitive to specific kinds of problems and solutions that are meaningful within their conceptual framework. In other words, the social science analysis and its technical and

⁶² Jay D. White and Guy B. Adams ed. *Research in Public Administration: Reflection on Theory and Practice* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1994), 184.

⁶³ Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1958), 134. Michael Polanyi, *Knowing and Being*, (London: Routledge, 1969), 173, 194, all quoted from Yu Zhenhua, “Ren shi lun he xin li yu luo ji zi bian shu” (An Analysis on Epistemology, Psychology, and Logic), *She hui ke xue (Social Science)* 12 (2009).

⁶⁴ Abraham H. Maslow, *The Psychology of Science: a Reconnaissance* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 15.

institutional agenda are not always preferred because of their objective efficacy. In a sense, modern people in modern politics are forced to be scientific since all the intellectual and technical resources they possess only encourage the scientific way to process politics. Scholars of organizational behavior have argued that bounded rationality formed by limited intelligent resources and habitus in organizations are the keys to understanding policymaking, an important aspect of politics.⁶⁵

All of the aforementioned studies suggest that the alternative understandings of politics are empirically available and conceptually credible. One might even say that this refocusing on political and human dimensions has formed an intellectual dictation for any researcher who wants to defend science and the modernity that is based on it.

More than a few researchers in China studies field have also attempted to revise the techno-scientific modernity, both directly and indirectly.

As Benjamin Elman's research has demonstrated, Even if we grant that science remains the only standard to examine the practicality of Chinese politics, then the Levensonian argument that Confucian education and politics inhibited the birth of modern science in China is probably invalid. The Ming civil service examinations, for instance, had an unmistakable emphasis on the knowledge of math and astronomy. More fundamentally, as Elman convincingly shows, the Chinese defined science in their own terms. He and other scholars have proven that the Needham question - why modern science was not first born in China? – is, at the very least, imprecise. Modern science is only one of many approaches to analyze and comprehend the natural and human world.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Jhon Forester, "Bounded Rationality and the Politics of Muddling Through," *Public Administration Review* 44:1 (1984), 24-26.

⁶⁶ See Benjamin A. Elman, *Civil Examinations and Meritocracy in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013). Benjamin A. Elman, *On Their own Terms: Science in China, 1550-1900* (Cambridge,

James Hevia goes further, giving an in-depth analysis of how the Western imperialist powers, particularly the British, meticulously organized material and discursive violence to “deterritorialize” and “reterritorialize” China, which was not only deprived of the military capability to defend its physical territories, but also the cultural and symbolic power to define and protect those discourses that had central significance for its legitimacy. What Hevia observes is precisely the objectification and scientization of Chinese political realm caused by techno-scientific modernity and its political imagination.⁶⁷

Those with a pre-modern or an early modern Chinese history background are much less limited by the modern political imagination and, as such, are more readily able to appreciate the original cultural commitments and non-scientized facets in China’s past. R. Bin Wong has noticed that the state’s retreat in the late and early 20th century, taken together with the ushering in of European political ideas and practices, created a “misleading” similarity between Chinese and Western derived modern politics. However, the non-modern indigenous human reality requires special treatment. As Wong points out:

For Twentieth Century China necessarily had to include strategies for local order spanning agrarian villages. How those would be similar to or different from the Confucian agenda prominent in the previous centuries was not obvious, especially because the conceptual categories for Confucian norms and practices was directly challenged and largely undermined by new Western ideas.⁶⁸

Wong suggests that the Confucian agenda, though substantially weakened, still exerted an obscured influence on Chinese politics, which may have been (misleadingly) reframed according to European categories. Thus, one can infer from Wong’s observation that there is still a lot of

Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005).

⁶⁷ James Hevia, *English Lessons: the Pedagogy of Imperialism in Ninetienth-century China* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

⁶⁸ R. Bin Wong, “Confucian Agendas for Material and Ideological Control in Modern China,” in Theodore Hutters, R. Bin Wong, and Paulin Yu ed. *Culture and State in Chinese History: Conventions, Accommodations, and Critiques* (Taipei: SMC Publishing INC, 1997), 322-323.

room for researchers to study the efficacy and role of the Confucian agenda, or more comprehensively, non-modern cultural and human dimensions within 20th century Chinese politics. As William Rowe also explicates in his valuable work about the Qing official Chen Hongmou, the seemingly impractical rite and moralistic teachings occupied the center of a very effective statecraft heritage.⁶⁹ Ho-fung Hung's studies into the early modern Chinese state all indicate the undeniable significance of the monarchial reputation to the legitimacy of the Qing Empire. He argues that even when the overall socioeconomic situation of the empire was deteriorating in the early 19th century, the stability and legitimacy of the Qing was decisively improved by the rehabilitation of the new monarch's moral authority. This polemic suggests that beyond the objectified extrapolitical factors, a moral/humanistic dimension existed that was valued by people whose understanding of politics and subsequent actions can hardly be explained through a techno-scientific framework. Although Hong's social science approach does not tell us how moral legitimacy actually functioned in minds of Qing subjects, his work does offer a strong bridgehead to further explore the unknown human dimensions in Chinese politics.⁷⁰

The most stimulating and instructive rethinking techno-scientific modernity comes from Sean Hsiang-lin Lei's new 2014 monograph. He cogently points towards the coevolutionary relationship between so-called tradition and modernity, arguing that modernity is constantly impacted and revised by tradition. The value of this coevolutionary scheme lies in way that it reintroduces the political dimensions back with understandings of the formation of tradition and

⁶⁹ See William T. Rowe, *Saving the World: Chen Hongmou and Elite Consciousness in Eighteenth-century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

⁷⁰ Ho-fung Hung, *Protest with Chinese Characteristics: Demonstrations, Riots, and Petitions in the Mid-Qing Dynasty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011)

modernity. The content and definition of the both realms are actually decided by their mutual political competition and negotiation.⁷¹

However, when it comes to those studies that directly deal with politics, especially its concrete operations, in post imperial China the research focuses remain predominately on the unfolding of techno-scientific modernity and politics. Though not without reflection and criticism, the various facets of modern politics in the Chinese government are much better studied and explained by China scholars than those non-modern ones. For instance, Elizabeth Remick's latest research on the relationship between prostitution regulation and local state-building has thoroughly discussed how different understanding of gender and corresponding prostitution control modes led to different formation of local governments.⁷² Other scholars have begun to rethink whether the unfolding of modern politics is the main and only facet worth explaining. Michael Tsin's work on Canton under the Nationalist governance is important, insofar that he is fully aware of the political consequence incurred by the social imagination of modernity. The suppression and violence of the government was never the indication of failed modernity. Instead, it was an integral part of the emancipatory power of modernity. People were liberated, so as to be disciplined by a more powerful authority. The objectified social body and its human characteristics that were nourished by modernity remained in continual need of the unrelenting discipline of a modern regime, so as not to grow into some other monstrous form.⁷³ Through his dim appraisal of modernist regimes, Tsin unveils the unscrupulousness of enshrining an artificial "society" as the legitimate source of politics, and thus hints at an alternative approach to understanding the relationship between the rulers and ruled.

⁷¹ Sean Hsiang-lin Lei, *Neither Donkey nor Horse: Medicine in the Struggle over China's Modernity*, 7-12.

⁷² Elizabeth J. Remick, *Regulating Prostitution in China: Gender and Local Statebuilding, 1900-1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 6-7.

⁷³ Michael Tsin, *Nation, Governance, and Modernity in China: Canton 1900-1927*, 180-183.

Against this general trend, Elizabeth Perry's latest work can be seen as one of the few exceptions that tackle "traditional realpolitik," but continue to emphasize the non-techno-scientific facets of politics in 20th century China. In breathtaking detail, Perry presents the micro-cultural dimensions within the revolutionary mobilization in Anyuan. Her project describes how workers were actually mobilized by traditional cultural symbols and resources, such as folklore beliefs and secret societies. Her argument is especially strong in demonstrating how revolutionary politics was as much about cultural identity as economic benefits. In this way, the human nature of workers is less objectified by the scientific facts that arise from objective economic and class interests. As the subtitle of her book suggests, Perry pays great attention to Chinese traditions, including its heritage of elitist political governance. Most importantly, she highlights the significance of human dignity in politics. Though her concept of dignity bears shades of modern liberalism, she remains undoubtedly correct in reminding us that human nature and its dimension should be put back to our understanding of modern politics.⁷⁴

Section Four: Re-evaluating Modern Chinese Politics and Its Fate

The purpose of the previous passages is not to promote a return to traditional realpolitik studies, but to reveal the conceptual framework which modern scholarship's dealings with politics. Nevertheless, modernity does admittedly have a tendency to depoliticize academic research. This characteristic of modernity offers a quite plausible conceptual and structural reason to explain the worldwide ebb of political history. Political history can only be legitimate when politics is seen as a field that generates its special facts and causes that are meaningful to our understanding of human activities in history. Politics loses much of its value when most

⁷⁴ Elizabeth Perry, *Anyuan: Mining China's Revolutionary Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

researches come to consider it a derivative phenomenon that is caused by other more fundamental factors, which can be better explained by economic, social, or cultural historians. In this regard, the decline of political history - or more precisely the enduring influence of depoliticized techno-scientific studies on politics - reflects not so much the overall academic disinterest in political issues as much as the unavoidable shift in approach towards understanding politics from the outside.

Against this macro modern background of depoliticization, the necessity and value of political history is unprecedented. A reflexive adoption of a political historical approach can be the cure of techno-scientific modernity for the following two reasons. First, the innovated political history with its ingrained but updated “fascination” with political dimensions has a greater potential than other approaches to revise the modern intellectual paradigm that reduces the political realm and its human dimensions into a synthetic medium of non-human extrapolitical. The traditional concerns of political history, which highlight political participants’ decisions and intentions in concrete events and contexts, can provide, with some necessary epistemological revisions (such as replacing omniscience with bounded rationality), contextual human details capable of defying a highly objectified social reality and the political narratives generated by techno-scientific modernity. In a nutshell, reemphasizing the political remains the most direct way to escape from the constraints of extrapolitical impositions on our political understanding. Meanwhile, a micro and everyday life perspective is by no means incompatible with the macro concerns of political history. Some research that has taken micro political analyses into account has been very productive in moving towards more profound and persuasive explanations of macro political development in modern China.⁷⁵ Moreover, by representing and

⁷⁵ For example, Kenneth Pomeranz reveals how different micro politics in socioeconomically similar counties created disparate local political economies, which can be seen self conscious political choice and responses to the

politicizing the process by which the political and extrapolitical are categorized and distinguished, this renewed political historical perspective can help researchers better comprehend even the seemingly depoliticized techno-scientific politics. There are always political and human dimensions that determine why certain modern objectifying forces unfold while the others frustrate.⁷⁶

At any rate, Chinese political studies needs a focal transformation when it comes to discerning modern phenomena, similar to those in the West, from those non modern but still vigorous indigenous strategies that problematize the definition and centrality of modernity. Peter Zarrow has proposed a very important question regarding political modernity in China: “What made it impossible for the Chinese to continue to imagine their politics in a dynastic state

macro change of the state’s commitment to maintain infrastructures in hinterland China. The profound outcome and impact of the state’s dedication to coastline areas and withdrawal from hinterland, therefore, is better indicated in varied local political strategies of adjustment. See Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Making of a Hinterland: State, Society, and Economy in Inland North China, 1853-1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). Jeffrey Wasserstrom demonstrates the micro cultural strategies in Chinese student movements. He successfully catches the centrality of sophisticated human/cultural/symbolic manipulation that is largely ignored in techno-scientific political understanding. As he reveals, Shanghai was not a cultural lacuna where all political actions could find and mobilize a ready objective political situation. Instead, effective political movements always counted on shrewd mobilization of locally specific resources. Jeffrey Wasserstrom, *Student Protests in Twentieth-century China: The View from Shanghai* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).

⁷⁶ Two works on modern Japanese history are especially relevant to and inspiring for the current research. In *Manufacturing Ideology*, William Tsutsui shows how American scientific management was introduced and emphasized as in fact an excuse to legitimize paternalistic rule in Japanese business and delay the investment for industry upgrading. *Manufacturing Ideology: Scientific Management in Twentieth-Century Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998). D. Eleanor Westney argued that the introduction of Western institutions in Meiji Japan was never a pure imitation. The Japanese actually emulated these external institutions selectively for their own purposes. However, what led to the successful adoption of Western social technologies was not the premade modernizing agendas but more continent indigenous reasons. For instance, the dispersive police deployment was first caused by Tokyo’s inconvenient inner city transportation. It further led to the generalization rather than specification of police duty. As a result, Japanese police system had a higher ability to pursue close surveillance and various administrative interferences than its French prototype. D. Eleanor Westney, *Imitation and Innovation: the Transfer of Western Organizational Patterns to Meiji Japan* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1987). Both works emphasize that the appearance of some characteristics of Western modernity often had indigenous roots and motivation that had little to do with the rational choice of technical reason. In other words, the seed of rational modernity often grows and blooms in the fecund “irrational” soil rather than in the well designed greenhouse. Both of them also highlight the distinction between political (paternalistic rule and police control of civilian activities) and extrapolitical (scientific management and city geography) envisioned by modernity can always be crossed and redefined in the actual political process.

framework?”⁷⁷ It seems appropriate to me to reframe his question: what made it possible for the Chinese to continue a politics that defies and revises modernity? What, however, is the concrete target of this new research focus? The focal transformation from high level politics to state-building, especially the focus on the administrative development of local Chinese governments, in large part crystallizes the hegemony of techno-scientific politics and therefore provides a clue for our new quest.

The Chinese state-building scholarship presumes a realm of administration that is central to the understanding of modern Chinese political development. As a matter of fact, the term *xingzheng* (行政), the Chinese translation of administration, was a new idea that did not garner high attention from the state or the educated class until the Republican era.⁷⁸ Administration was particularly emphasized both within and without the Nationalist government, and was instated as the major content within the project of modernizing state-building. In many places, administration was literally equal to politics. For this reason, administration, as a political realm and a discipline, can provide a means of reexamining the techno-scientific political imagination. At the same time, the hegemony of techno-scientific understanding of politics is equally strong in local state studies. For one thing, as the executive ends of the modern state, local governments do have their objective functional requirements, such as taxation, which have to be met by concrete techniques and scientific methods. The techno-scientific conceptual framework is certainly necessary in order to understand the implement of governmental orders on local level. The functional role of government also makes it tempting for researchers to further depoliticize

⁷⁷ Peter Zarrow, *After Empire: the Conceptual Transformation of the Chinese State, 1900-1949* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 4-5.

⁷⁸ *Xingzheng* in traditional Chinese context was a nonspecific term referring to the action or state of promoting some ruling agendas. Japanese began to use *Xingzheng* to mean administration in the late 19th century. This translation then was adopted by Chinese in the early 20th century. In other words, there was no concept or realm of administration in pre-modern China. See Zhang Fan, “*Xing zheng*” *shi hua* (*The Historical Story of Administration*) (Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2007), 1.

local politics. As a result, works on local states tend to be least reflexive on the unique cultural and human assumption of techno-scientific politics. The rationalization of administration, thus, becomes a natural and inevitable prime concern.

For these reasons, a focus on how the depoliticized political imagination shaped modern Chinese local administration provides opportune means to confront the blind adoption of Western derived political modernity as the only way to understand Chinese politics. This direct confrontation will be especially beneficial insofar as it exposes how techno-scientific politics had already been adapted and challenged during the Nationalist era. The discovery of this dissertation authenticates precisely this scenario.

Admittedly, local administration is a realm far too huge for one researcher's limited energies. In order to thoroughly explore the developments and deviations of techno-scientific politics in Nationalist local administration, this study will focus on a special official group in the Nationalist China. This group is special because it originated from, was developed by, and was dedicated to the discourse and practice of techno-scientific politics. An important characteristic of these officials is that they came from the same school, the first and only one in modern China, where they received a standard undergraduate education that reflected nothing less than the effort to objectify politics into a scientific profession. Thus the school and its graduates offer a perfect window through which me might observe the history of techno-scientific politics and its influence on Chinese political modernity. That is the reason this research deals with the Central Politics School and the encounters of its members.

Before I provide an abstract of concrete issues in chapters of this dissertation, it is worth defining and explaining out a few important concepts that frequently reoccur in my research.

In this dissertation, I use “Chinese statecraft” to refer to political discourse and practice based on non-techno-scientific modernity. I especially emphasize the dimension of “craft” that involves tacit human knowledge, which is largely un-objectifiable and therefore elusive in the conventional epistemological structure of science. In this sense, statecraft distinguishes itself from Western derived political economy and the social sciences that shape the mainstream conceptual framework of politics and history in China and the world. This social scientific approach is certainly important, and in many ways indispensable if contemporary scholarship is to comprehend modern politics and state building in China. However, as I will indicate throughout this dissertation, the modern political imagination undergirded by social sciences only covers a portion, albeit a large portion, of political reality and modernity in China. We might say that the social sciences are at their best when analyzing long term and large scale human phenomena because such phenomena are usually caused by relatively stable factors; these are suitable for scientific approaches which objectify their subjects, so as to treat them as predictable and controllable variables necessary for the establishment of some models or theories. However, when the time span and range are significantly reduced, the advantages of social science are also seriously weakened. Activities and events in politics are caused by not only micro trends and structures, but also short term and small-scale factors. The basic assumptions and prevailing tendencies within the social sciences turn out to be much less useful and effective in catching and comprehending these more transient moments. Consequently, it is almost inevitable that many social scientists instinctively avoid or simply ignore those elements that defy the objectification of science. In this situation, unless they claim (as some of them do) that only long-term and large scale factors really matter in understanding politics, it seems somewhat self evident that some non-scientific conceptual frameworks are necessary for a comprehensive

understanding of all the facets of politics. Applying non-scientific analytical tools is of great importance when the target of research is a politics with various non-modern and pre-modern cultural characteristics, for most of these cultural/human dimensions are based on a non-objectified reality. This is not to say that cultural characteristics are by nature subjective, or even purely unreal; it simply means that some parts of reality are not observable for scientific methods.

Chinese statecraft, under the circumstances, provides a complementary (not secondary) conceptual framework that is capable of subsuming both modern and non-modern politics simultaneously. The application of Chinese statecraft does not mean the exclusion or the denial of modern politics. Rather, it adds in human and non-scientific dimensions to the techno-scientific political imagination. Through the present research, I will emphasize time and again that modern politics by nature was dependent on those non-scientific and human dimensions that should be an integral part of political modernity, rather than its antithesis.

The understanding of Chinese statecraft also changes significantly. As William Rowe has insightfully pointed out, the Qing statecraft had been a body of knowledge undergirded and guided by Confucian classic ritual principles. That is why *Statecraft Compendium* (*huang chao jing shi wen bian* 皇朝經世文編) compiled in 1826 starts with discussions about proper rites and ritual principles.⁷⁹ Such civilizing concerns had been an integral and central part of Qing statecraft. However, with the drastic transformation of knowledge in modern China from classic oriented humanistic cultivation to science centered inquiry, the Chinese statecraft as understood by modern scholars has become very similar to the content of Western political economy and social science. For many contemporary researchers, the humanistic quests of Chinese statecraft are largely ignored or deemed irrelevant to the actual improvement of state power and wealth.

⁷⁹ William Rowe, *Saving the World*, 406-7.

Only concrete military and economic policies are studied as substantive measures of self-strengthening.⁸⁰ In the new conceptual framework, the traditional emphasis on the correctness of human nature and behavior is almost exclusively considered to be, at best, an unrealistic noble dream. More often than not, people just cannot imagine how their moralistic teachings were actually effective in politics if they do not “translate” classic human knowledge into modern scientific language, such as brainwashing or psychological discipline. Recently, various scholars have reevaluated ideas and rhetoric drawn from traditional Chinese statecraft, but they generally have difficulty giving cultural dimensions a proper place in their social science based explanations.⁸¹

Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that Chinese statecraft is by no means the synonym of the Chinese tradition, even though the two realms overlap each other significantly. It has been an academic commonplace that tradition is invented and continually changes with the times. From this perspective, it seems not improper to say that Chinese statecraft contains many techniques and discourses that originated in the Chinese tradition, which has consistently been revisited and reinvented by the Chinese to solve their contemporary problems. Be that as it may, the meaning of Chinese statecraft I purport in this dissertation will be significantly underestimated if readers only see it the latest version of invented tradition. Tradition, however defined, is not modernity. Seeing the Chinese statecraft as the innovations of imperial tradition tends to consolidate the dichotomy between the past and present. Moreover, the Chinese statecraft in this dissertation is not simply a tool used by modern officials to fulfill a matured and fixed ultimate modernity. The major purpose of my work is to show how Chinese statecraft was developed in the first place to

⁸⁰ Xie Yang, “Jin san shi nian lai zhong guo jin shi jing shi si xiang yan jiu shu ping” (An Narrative Comments on Researches of thoughts of Modern Chinese Statecraft in the Last Thirty Years), *Xin shi xue (New History)* 19(4) (2008).

⁸¹ Peter Moody, “Political Culture and the Study of Chinese Politics” *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 14(253) (2009).

supplement the deficiencies of a high modernist administrative approach and its vision of politics, but then went on to become increasingly central in the modern political agenda. In other words, I am showing a largely neglected political development in which Chinese statecraft, with all its discourses and practices, gradually retrieved its influence on not only administrative and political techniques but also at the discursive level. Although the hegemony of techno-scientific political modernity continued in the end for various structural and contingent reasons, it seems to me that there was unmistakable potential for the lately developed Chinese statecraft to redefine the discourse of political modernity. In this regard, the Chinese statecraft should certainly not be treated as some upgraded version of tradition. Instead, it proposes a serious question to the legitimacy of the objectified human nature assumption in politics that is shaped by the epistemological structure of techno-scientific modernity. This current work intends to reveal an alternative modernity, derived from Chinese statecraft with non-modern rather than pre-modern resources. To sum up, Chinese statecraft as a conceptual structure stands as a potent cure for the reigning depoliticized and dehumanized political imagination.

Consequently, in this research, modernity is a loosely defined category; a promise, rather than a matured status. Modernity with its indisputable Western parts and components is considered to be a semi-manufactured product that will be adjusted and completed for Chinese demands, with Chinese materials and according to Chinese methods. Chinese modernity, as defined in this way, will be less certain in its value orientation. The values and qualities usually attributed to the conventional modernity are not necessary “modern” in this study. Accordingly, the political modernity in this research is more like a battlefield upon which discourses and practices are debated for being accepted by or excluded from contemporary people’s understanding of politics. Chinese political modernity is a changing status quo. It is modern not

because it is destined to be more like its Western counterpart, but because it is unavoidably entangled with West modernity. This entanglement, for one thing, means that Chinese political modernity cannot exist as a pure indigenous phenomenon. For another, it suggests that Western modernity is like some fibers within the greater fabric. Without these fibers, the fabric of Chinese modernity might unravel. However, it makes no sense to view the fabric as only the aggregate of some, not all, of its formative units because a group of fibers does not, per se, define the characteristics of the entire fabric.⁸²

To avoid repeating the problems associated with the techno-scientific conceptual structure, this current research will not attempt to establish some general models or mechanisms within the local administration. All cases provided in this research primarily demonstrate the limitations of public administration, and when alternative approaches are posited in a few concrete and specific contexts, there is no guarantee that they will hold valid in other places, still less perform a role within any general argument about China entire. The tacit knowledge of human beings by nature defies scientific generalizations that can only be proven and represented under given variables. Despite the fact that the politics based on this human knowledge is highly contextual and therefore unlikely to be replicated, it does not hinder my argument that some unscientific forms of human knowledge were indispensable to effective local administration.

⁸² The indigenous dynamics of Chinese modernity has indeed been reappraised after Paul Cohen's appeal for China-centered studies. However, much less attention has been given to modernity per se. More often than not, modernity is still defined according to those Western tenets, even though now most scholars agree that these modern tenets can also be found in Chinese history. Whether there is a Chinese modernity rather than West style modernity with Chinese characteristics is largely left unexamined. Chinese components may play a much important role in the formation of modernity in China. They are at best local raw materials used in the production of a Western commodity. In this sense, Chinese modernity is simply an iPhone manufactured in Chinese factories by Chinese workers. The potential of Paul Cohen's China centered approach, thus, is never fully released because scholars, including Cohen himself, still maintain using social sciences as the major, if not the only, analytical tool to explicate Chinese human and political phenomena. See Paul A. Cohen, *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

By the same token, the distinction between “objective” narratives of the third parts or official archives and the subjective personal description will be less important than the discursive intention and practical details indicated in these materials. Official archives may contain a lot of scientific facts that have varied confirmable objectivities. More subjective narration, however, can shed light on aspects that are often obscured or ignored in the pursuit of scientific authenticity. For example, when an official published an article on a journal describing his administrative experience, he presumably considered the readership, and his story had to be believable for the majority of this perceived readership. The author’s effort to make his argument convincing for his readers is a human fact that tells researchers valuable information. Why the author thought an administrative measure was worth explaining, but took for granted some other things, compels researchers to admit the huge difference between present and past regarding the concept of politics and its facts. Sometimes, one finds that an author discusses with great seriousness some suggestions he believed unacceptable for his contemporaries. In this situation, there is good reason to temporarily assume the authenticity of the narratives until other counterevidence is found. I will avoid denying the credibility of a political description simply because its objectivity is suspicious and improvable according to modern understandings and scientific standards. As long as no evidence can falsify a subjective material, it seems to me an imperfect but reasonable strategy to trust the source that has a consistent rationale.

Finally, let me introduce major themes and content of this dissertation.

Public administration, the latest and most unexamined expression of modern governmentality, was developed in the United States around the turn of the twentieth century. It was introduced into Nationalist China in the late 1920s, and adopted soon thereafter by the Central Politics School in the early 1930s. Public administration promised to liberate the fully

rational and scientific aspects of administration from the yoke of irrational political struggle. The extreme appeal and lofty proclamations of techno-scientific politics contained just as many political concerns as it did scientific components. The first section of Chapter One will explain the political context and influences that shaped the core tenets of American public administration. The Chinese background in which public administration was embraced after the May 4th movement will also be sketched out, so as to explicate the birth of the Central Politics School and its public administration curriculum.

The Central Politics School, as the only higher education institute established by the Nationalist Party in 1929 for cultivating professional local bureaucrats who were expected to modernize the entire Chinese local governance by implementing fully rationalized and scientized administration, provides a useful analytical platform for us to rethink political modernity and corresponding understandings of politics. As I will also show in Chapter One, the school became committed to the formation of modern local government along the lines of American public administration, which was then (as it probably still is now) held to be the best representative of the science of high modernism. After receiving four years' undergraduate education in the theories and techniques of public administration, graduates of the school were assigned to use their social scientific knowledge to administer county governments and to implement modernizing endeavors. The encounters of the school's graduates are well positioned to showcase techno-scientific China and its modern fate. To create ideal conditions for the fulfillment of techno-scientific politics, the Nationalist Government even established two experimental counties, Jiangning and Lanxi, which were entirely managed by the school's professors and graduates in the regime's core areas. These two counties hosted different approaches to modern political regimens. If the commitment to the scientization of the political

process in Jiangning met some success, the extraordinary fiscal and human resources demanded made the sustainability and feasibility of this high modernist administration dubious. By contrast, the deviations from the orthodoxy of political rationalism in Lanxi occurred almost simultaneously alongside the ascendancy of a rationalization based on much more affordable human and fiscal investments. Many Central Politics School officials surprisingly found those pre-modern and non-modern techniques more practical and central than scientific knowledge. During the heyday of public administration, modern administrators increasingly found it necessary to include such hybrids into their “modern” local governance. Some of the school’s best students began to realize that objectification was not always the only way, or even the ideal way, to comprehend and command the governing reality. New administrative techniques that rested on human knowledge rather than scientific objectivity were explored and developed.

The outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war in July 1937 ended the golden age of public administration and its unreserved commitment to techno-scientific modernity. However, at the same time, the skyrocketing demand for human and fiscal resources in a modern war made it increasingly necessary to objectify society into disposable manpower and logistic materials. Central Politics School officials at the West Zhejiang frontline turned out to be very capable of handling the demands of wartime administration and mobilization. Paradoxically, their ability to objectify the society for the war effort came not so much from the school’s syllabus of techno-scientific modernity as the application of hybrids that turned the world less scientific and more humanistic. In Chapter Two, the two counties governed by Central Politics School magistrates will be discussed in order to demonstrate how highly efficient wartime mobilization and the full rationalization of grass-root governmental units was actually based on many “irrational” measures across varied socioeconomic contexts. Whether in relatively isolated Changhua, or in

more commercialized Xiaofeng, feasible governance always defied the dictates of scientific objectification. The most sophisticated wartime economies and administrations mixed savvy financial leverage, creative organization of primitive transportation, calculated impreciseness, and classic literary cultivation, and thus can be seen an unmistakable example of Bruno Latour's hybrid in modernity. The depoliticized and objectified techno-scientific modernity alone is inadequate to describe and comprehend the reality in West Zhejiang. As such, Chapter Two invites readers to think through whether or not the techno-scientific modernity is a self-sufficient analytical tool to explain the dynamism of modern political phenomena in China.

For those who rightly argue that a hybrid modern administration enacted upon a non-modern infrastructural basis may support the multiplicity of modernization but does not challenge the rationalist modernity as the highest stage of human civilization, Chapter Three provides a very different perspective for readers to ponder. The objectifying and modernizing efforts carried out by the Central Politics School officials incurred the fiercest denials of modernity, its political ramifications, and the modern nation state in the ethnic frontier province of Guizhou. It will be argued in this chapter that the entire modern political cognitive assumption, or, to use James Scott's words, "seeing like a state," is a fundamentally wrong idea to understand and handle human realities. Turning indigenous people into modern ethnic minority citizens with rationalized and economized human natures made some of the most capable and modern-minded Central Politics School officials entirely misread the alarming messages from the society, and miss some excellent opportunities to use non-modern resources to defuse the explosive social tensions. On the contrary, the very "traditional" Confucian imagination of human nature and tactics of imperial frontier statecraft turned out to be a much more effective and veritable political conceptual framework in terms of fulfilling the state's goals and mitigating the people.

The special backwardness of the hinterland province Guizhou offers an ideal non-modern context where scientific and economic resources were decisively insufficient, but non-material human potentials were abundant. These invisible human resources could only be utilized by officials who were equipped with the intellectual instruments of Chinese statecraft, rather than the tools of the social sciences. The story of one unique Central Politics School official who started his career as a staunch disciple of orthodox public administration but later became a remarkable Confucian official with a masterful comprehension of human knowledge will be juxtaposed against an intricate counter-insurgent process, in which a shrewd non-Politics School censor realized the full potential of imperial frontier statecraft. He deployed non-modern political judgment in a large-scale riot, which was triggered by techno-scientific politics. Without resorting to objective analysis of social sciences, these two officials relied on their comprehension of tacit/human knowledge, and completed their missions at a surprisingly low cost. From these cases and comparisons, one can see how very different political imaginations and assumptions of human nature actually “deobjectified” the objectified reality into a humanistic world, and through this process solved problems that were meant to be insolvable in eyes of techno-scientific modernizers. The endeavor of these non-modern officials should not be seen as merely an expediency, which did not fundamentally deviate from the tracks of the techno-scientific political agenda. Rather, it sheds light on a parallel politics with its own conceptual, normative, and practical assertions of political modernity.

In the conclusion, I will explicate why the observations based on techno-scientific modernity and its political imagination keep failing to provide reliable descriptions and forecasts of political development in modern and contemporary China, and perhaps, in other nonwestern places as well. I will suggest: researchers need to put back the heritage of Chinese statecraft and

its pertinent assumptions of human nature into the bigger picture of Chinese politics. Finally, I will demonstrate the historical meaning of the rise and deviation of Chinese techno-scientific politics in world history.

Chapter One

The Adoption and Adaptation of Public Administration in 1930s China

In this chapter, I will first discuss in Section One how public administration, as the latest version of techno-scientific politics, emerged in the late 19th century US and was subsequently introduced to China in the 1930s by Chinese intellectuals who dreamt of ending the meaningless political strife by establishing and scientizing the realm of administration. Their effort led to the founding of the Central Politics School by the Nationalist regime in 1929. Section Two considers the application of public administration by the school's teachers and graduates in Jiangning Experimental County, which was designed to deliver the most advanced administrative approaches according to the prevailing scientific methods and modern technologies. While some undeniable progress was made in administrative rationalization and efficiency improvement, this experiment revealed more problems of public administration and its techno-scientific principles than it brought achievements to the county. Section Three focuses on the case of Lanxi Experimental County, another Central Politics School base. The heterodox public administration promoted in this county represented the beginning, and also a turning point, in the development of indigenous political modernity that readopted imperial statecraft practices to serve the "modern" goals proposed by public administration. In the final section, the meaning of the Lanxi Experimental County will be further elucidated. With the spread of Central Politics School graduates into more counties in Jiangsu and Zhejiang, new approaches based on indigenous resources rather than scientific methods were developed. Before the outbreak of World War Two, there were a group of young Central Politics School officials who had

accumulated some practical knowledge of administration who would go on to further challenge the hegemony of techno-scientific politics during the war itself.

Section One: The Birth of American Public Administration and Its Chinese Counterpart

In 1914, two years after the birth of the Republic of China, a translation of the famous American political scholar Frank J. Goodnow's article "On the Education of Chinese Bureaucrat" (*zhong guo guan li jiao yu lun* 中國官吏教育論) was published in the widely read comprehensive journal *The Eastern Miscellany*.⁸³ As a high-ranking advisor hired by the Chinese Government, Goodnow expressed his views in a series of issues on Chinese politics, ranging from the form of the constitution to the role of parliament. Most of these suggestions can be categorized to the realm of conventional political science. "On The Education of Chinese Bureaucrats" is noteworthy, insofar that Goodnow's opinions in the article represent public administration thinking that was at the cutting-edges of research field, even in the US at the time. Goodnow, who is now remembered for his ideal of a scientific administration independent from politics, proposed in the article that the Chinese government should establish a professional school that would enlist and train 16 -17 year old teenagers to be future modern administrators. These students would be given the knowledge and skill to run the government in a manner that was specific to the development of Chinese society in the modern world. For a country like China, which arguably had the most sophisticated heritage of cultivating officials who were capable of ruling an empire, Goodnow's proposition was hardly surprising. There had been many precedents of establishing schools to cultivate officials throughout many dynasties in the Chinese

⁸³ Gudenuo (Frank J. Goodnow), "Zhong guo guan li jiao yu lun" (The Education of Chinese Bureaucrat), *The Eastern Miscellany* 11(5) (1914), 1-5.

history. One of the main objectives in Wang Anshi (1021-1086)'s political reform was to use school-cultivated officials to replace those who would have previously passed the civil service exams. However, despite its familiarity to the Chinese educated, Goodnow's suggestion did not win many supporters. For one thing, most Chinese intellectuals during this time paid much greater attention to Goodnow's pro-Yuan Shikai political perspectives, which were intent on justifying Yuan's efforts to weaken the parliamentary democracy and build a de facto presidential despotism. Against this background, Goodnow's suggestions were merely treated as objective conclusions of academic research, even though some of his points and observations about Chinese political reality did make sense.⁸⁴ More critically, even though the proposal to instill officials with professional and scientific knowledge rather than general classic humanistic education did reflect a new necessity to enhance the capability of the aged Chinese governmental organization, legitimizing and institutionalizing the political participation (or even the hegemony) of youngsters in governmental affairs remained an proposal too radical for the majority of Chinese intelligentsia, who had grown up in a culture that valued the wisdom of venerable elders rather than the physical and intellectual dynamism of juveniles. While there had always been a few brilliant young men who became *Jinshi* degree holders and field officials in their early twenties, such talented young men were legendary exceptions; their age remained a disadvantage, rather an advantage, in politics. In general, encouraging men without mustaches on their mouths to enter into an officialdom, which had its own centuries-long customs and involved in so many intricate conflicts of huge interests, was not only an irrational, but even an irresponsible and immoral move.⁸⁵ The editor of the magazine added a short comment before the article, saying

⁸⁴ Que Guanglian, "Gu de nuo yu min chu zhong guo zheng zhi" (Frank Goodnow and the Politics in the Early Republican China), *Bai nian chao (The Tide of the Century)* 4 (2004).

⁸⁵ Even today when young political activists have been widely heroized, "men without mustache on their mouths are reliable (*zui shang wu mao ban shi bu lao*, 嘴上無毛辦事不牢)" is still a widely accepted conventional wisdom

that Goodnow's suggestion had been overruled. The indifferent tone lightly indicated a sense of impotence. The editor might well have thought that the ideals put forward by Goodnow, though worth reading, were not really promising or feasible. Both the editor and Goodnow would probably be surprised if they knew that a school, almost exactly following Goodnow's blueprint, would be established within 14 years by some young readers of the article. Apart from Goodnow's very insightful suggestion that China should not rely on youth experts who had returned from overseas after studying abroad during their teenage years (when their mentality was not mature enough to understand the real West and appreciate the true value of Chinese tradition), all his other stipulations could be found in the school. There was a specialist curriculum, similar to college education but focusing more on administrative methods and techniques, and a teaching style that emphasized the combination of knowing and doing. Even the library, which by Goodnow's blueprint should be full of Chinese and Western reference books and governmental data, was loyally followed. One can not help but ask what happened during the 14 years that separated the publication of this article from the establishment of the Central Politics School in 1928. To answer this question, we need to trace the development of public administration in the United States during the Progressive Era (1890-1920).

The emergence of US Public Administration in the eve of the Progressive Era was anything but a coincidence. For several reasons, the second industrial revolution and other instances within earlier US history lead to the emergence of this academic yet practical realm from the political sciences. By the last decade of the 19th century, the rapid industrialization that followed the Civil War had turned a predominantly agricultural society into one that boasted great manufacturing sectors. Accompanying this economic transition was a similarly rapid

among Chinese people. Also, many stories of talented young degree holders end up with tragedies that confirm another Chinese old saying: "it is the most unfortunate thing to be successful at a young age. (*shao nian de zhi da bu xing*, 少年得志大不幸)."

urbanization that brought a significant part of population into built up areas, where the traditional municipal governments were (usually) incompetent, corrupt, and poorly organized in terms of their ability to deal with problems caused by this intensifying concentration of people and factories. Consequently, a high demand for better municipal management materialized among urban residents. This demand was especially strong among the rising professionals and industrial magnates, who had accumulated wealth and political ambition in industrializing cities, which remained dominated by old style politics that served the partisan interests of electorate demagogues or “bosses,” rather than the industrial sector as a whole. What this professional and capitalist public envisioned in politics were national and municipal governments that were staffed by more rectitude and competent employees, and who could provide timely and effective service to facilitate the operation of industrial society.⁸⁶ Secondly, the rise of public administration also has a lot to do with the US democratic tradition. This was rooted in a distrust of government, and thus a desire to retain it firmly under the control of people. As early as the 1830s, the Jacksonian democracy had legitimized the spoils system, which opened all government positions to partisans who claimed to represent the latest and most correct opinion of the public. The corollary of this populist discourse was a governmental system in which administrative processes were often directly controlled by elected legislators or their proxies. Ironically, the direct legislature takeover of executive power did not prevent the abuse of governmental power. On the contrary, electorate representatives of people turned out to be more prone than bureaucrats to appropriate governmental resources in the name of serving the interests of specific constituencies. The unavoidable involvement of government in conflicts of interest among almost all sectors within industrializing society made it urgent to eliminate, or at least to

⁸⁶ Richard D. Bingham, *Managing Local Governments: Public Administration in Practice* (Newbury Park, Calif: Sage, 1991), 16-18.

mitigate, these populist tendencies by establishing an administration that was independent from individual interests and more responsible for the overall welfare of the society. The appearance of the city manager system, in which the executive power and relative independence of the municipal government were respected by the city council, can be seen the harbinger of a more professional and public-oriented administration. It was requested that accountability be clarified, and the public expected a more economic administration that promoted studies into the best ways to approach the management of public affairs; these were supposed to be not only efficient, but also measurable. The establishment of the New York Bureau of Municipal Research in 1905 represents only the start of a series of municipal and administrative reforms.⁸⁷

Last but not least, there was the strong lobbying of small businessmen whose conservative views stimulated the development of public administration in a more paradoxical way. Compared to the urban professionals and political elite who sought a government that was more responsive to the growing modernity in US society, small businessmen did not have so many great visions of future. They did, however, turn out to be more indomitable when it came to protecting their individual interests, pushing politicians to establish “customer departments” that were mainly responsible for the needs of some social groups within the government. Though the “public” these customer departments served were certainly not “the public,” these units were the predecessors of later, more specified and professionalized, apparatuses of public administration. This is why some scholars believe the Progressive Era marked “the triumph of conservatives.”⁸⁸

Against the abovementioned historical background, the publication of the journal article “The Study of Administration” in 1887 is not so much the personal creation of Woodrow Wilson,

⁸⁷ Daniel W. Williams, “Measuring Government in the Early Twentieth Century” *Public Administration Review* 63(6) (2003), 650.

⁸⁸ Guy B. Adams, “Enthralled with Modernity: the Historical Context of Knowledge and Theory Development in Public Administration,” *Public Administration Review* 52 (4) (1992), 364.

who is considered by many public administration scholars to be one of the founding fathers of this discipline, as the proclamation of a collective will. Echoing the general appeal of the rising educated public, the administration Wilson proposed in his article was not simply the latest renovation of the old political system. Instead, the administration of the coming new age was “a science of administration which shall seek to straighten the paths of government, to make its business less unbusinesslike, to strengthen and purify its organization, and to crown its duties with dutifulness.”⁸⁹ As he confesses in the article, the goal of this science of administration is fundamentally different from the previous reform of civil service, which mainly aimed at replacing corrupt officials with righteous and capable ones.⁹⁰ Wilson envisions administration as a new realm that is independent from electorate realpolitik, and responsible only for the operation of executive branches of the state according to impersonal, apolitical and objective standards, such as efficiency and cost. Phrased alternatively, by defining administration as a science, the government Wilson described is not only a more competent version of the previous state apparatus, but also an essentially different political entity with a specific way to perceive reality, identify problems, and give solutions “scientifically.” To further enhance the universal credibility of his administrative science, Wilson did not hesitate to claim “So far as administrative functions are concerned, all governments have a strong structural likeness; more than that, if they are to be uniformly useful and efficient, they must have a strong structural likeness.”⁹¹ In his opinion, as all wheels are round, there is only one form of scientific and

⁸⁹ Woodrow Wilson, “The Study of Administration,” *Political Science Quarterly* 2:2 (1887) 201.

⁹⁰ Daniel W. Williams, “Measuring Government in the Early Twentieth Century,” *Public Administration Review* 63(6) (2003), 644.

⁹¹ Woodrow Wilson, “The Study of Administration,” 218. The italic is added by Wilson himself.

therefore efficient administration. Therefore, the theory and principle of public administration is universal and can be applied to any polity⁹²

At first glance, the administration defined as “impartial scientific method” by Wilson concerns only the objective need to promote and maintain high quality public service. This discourse was derived from the Enlightenment modernity tradition, in which the only correct and legitimate way to understand the world, be it natural or human, was by analyzing all phenomena through the lens of scientific positivism and technical rationality. By definition, a scientifically-oriented modern political culture required the exclusion of human and political considerations when dealing with social affairs. However, just like any other form of science, the knowledge and practice of administration, though in theory entirely open and learnable to anyone who desires it, tends to give educated practitioners who are more capable of comprehending the scientific way of knowing a political say much larger than laymen, who do not have the access to scientific education.⁹³ Therefore, even though Wilson argues polemically that this scientific understanding of administration would never contradict the principle of democracy because it is only the loyal servant of people’s will, behind Wilson’s emphasis on the objective and scientific nature of administration was an implicit attempt to prevent electoral politicians who knew nothing about administration as a profession from interfering with the process of administration.⁹⁴ Politicians’ arbitrary power would be much less secret and absolute before the authority of science. In this regard, defining administration as a science per se was a sophisticated political discourse, and a strategy that aimed to change the allocation of political

⁹² Vincent Ostrom, *The Intellectual Crisis in American Public Administration* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2008), 35.

⁹³ Yaron Ezrahi, “Science and the Political Imagination in Contemporary Democracies” in Sheila Jasonoff ed. *States of Knowledge: the Co-production of Science and Social Order* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 256.

⁹⁴ O. C. McSwite, *Legitimacy of Public Administration: a Discourse Analysis* (London: Sage Publication, 1997), 157-159.

authority and responsibility. This served the political interests of the WASP, who tried to curb the rocketing power of bosses and their immigrant supporters. Based on this political discourse, Wilson and, later, Frank Johnson Goodnow, were both advocates of a dichotomized politics and administration, which argues that the line between politics and administration can be and should be clearly demarcated so as to promote the general welfare of American political life. The administrative process should be immune from partisan struggles in politics, and controlled by public administrators who know the most scientific and efficient ways to enforce the will of people. Thus, one can say that by resorting to the new authority of science and its objectiveness, Wilson tried very carefully to revive the elitist tradition of Alexander Hamilton and the Federalists who had argued the necessity of establishing an administrative state immune to the follies of populists in the overall anti-elitist trend of the US politics.⁹⁵

Thus, even though the nature and content of the practical administration was far too rich and complicated to be characterized as purely scientific, the initial emphasis was on the scientific essence and the independence of administration. This was first proposed in the Progressive Era, and continually propagated by protagonists of public administration as a cumbersome but reliable shield, designed to protect the discipline from attacks and doubts of other powerful political opinions. However, such a discursive strategy also limited the possibility and direction of the subject, and lay down the tracks for the development of public administration well into the 1930s, and, in many ways, the rest of the 20th century.⁹⁶ This political discourse was, no doubt, significantly enhanced by the flamboyant achievements of American industry during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. “Businesslike” methods, such as the scientific management of Frederick

⁹⁵ O. C. McSwite, *Legitimacy of Public Administration: a Discourse Analysis*, 163-164. James P. Pfiffner and Mary Boardman, *Managing the Executive Branch in the 20th Century: Consolidation and Disaggregation*. PAR online monograph series, Foundations of Public Administration. <http://www.aspanet.org/scriptcontent/pdfs/EPA-MEB-article.pdf>. Accessed July 9, 2009, 2.

⁹⁶ Charles J. Fox and Hugh T. Miller, *Postmodern Public Administration* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2007), 3-7.

Winslow Taylor, were eagerly introduced and emulated by governmental units. Dividing and standardizing administrative process into the most effective steps made administration more like assembly lines of administrative products, which boasted measurable quality and value. Wartime mobilization and the management of mass production also provided scholars of public administration with the practical experience to enrich and examine the content of their young discipline.⁹⁷ Of course, the ingrained political traditions of electorate democracy, local autonomy, and a preference for small government kept the reality of governmental management in the majority of the United States far from the ideal-type practice of public administration as envisioned by professionals like Woodrow Wilson. However, by the end of the Progressive Era, when Chinese students began studying American paradigms of running government, public administration as an advanced realm of political science and discourse was well established in many universities throughout the United States.⁹⁸

One should not take the characteristics of strong theory and municipal orientation in the US public administration for granted. As many scholars have pointed out, US public administration had to emphasize its theories and principles in a large sense because its early protagonists, compared to their European administrative science colleagues who tended to be senior bureaucrats themselves, were often denied access to interior governmental data and documents by the hostile incumbent officials who doubted the political motives of early public

⁹⁷ O. C. McSwite, *Legitimacy of Public Administration: a Discourse Analysis*, 140.

⁹⁸ The university-based academic communities in the US during the 1920s could not form an agreement on whether public administration is a legitimate realm of knowledge or simply the application of some more general principles that can be found in other humanistic and social studies. Influenced by strong European humanistic tradition, many scholars questioned the value of a professionalized public administration per se. They still believed that the duty of university was to cultivate generalist elite rather than specialist clerks. Meanwhile, even though the first master degree of municipal administration would not be founded in University of Michigan until 1914, and the first academic institute of public administration (Maxwell School) would not be established in Syracuse University until 1924. there is no doubt that courses regarding municipal and public administration had been taught by individual professors, such as William F. Willoughby. See Avery Leiserson, "The Study of Public Administration," in Fritz Morstein Marx (ed.), *Elements of Public Administration*, (New York: Prentice-Hall-Inc, 1946), 38. O. C. McSwite, *Legitimacy of Public Administration: a Discourse Analysis*, 161.

administrative scholars. In other words, America's public administration had to be theoretical in the beginning, since a legitimate base could not develop from a firm insight of administrative process. The municipal and public orientation was also a forced gesture on the part of the discipline, an effort to demonstrate its indifference with national and polity agendas. To compensate for their poor understanding of how administration actually operated and to reduce the hostility of incumbent officials, early public administrative scholars intentionally limited themselves to more general and concrete technical issues, such as office management or maintenance of roads. Both appeared to be relevant to all situations, and irrelevant to any specific administrative knowhow. In so doing, the US public administration was able to win increasing support from both the political and the civilian elite. The cost was the trivialization of focus, and some inevitable political ignorance. Moreover, because public administration education was established in universities rather than governmental units, it was hard for the new discipline to develop along practical lines. Due to a lack of teachers who had first hand experience, or a non-humanistic professional background (such as civil engineering and medical degrees), the academic education of public administration inevitably focused on general principles and questions relevant to a highly abstract and nonspecific administration, rather than actual problems in given administrative situations. As a result, despite its ambitious assertion of dealing with all municipal and administrative issues, the most developed realms of US public administration education remained personnel, budgets, and logistics management which, compared to road building and public hygiene, required relatively less special skills and intimate understandings of reality. One can say that the early public administration was not all that different from the office management of public sections.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Zhang Kangzhi, Zhang Qianyou, "Gong gong xin zheng xue fa zhan shi shan de yan jiu ji qi jiao yu" (The studies and Education in the History of the Development of Public Administration), *zong gong ningbo shi wei dang xiao*

All these elements nourished the strong scientism, which overwhelmingly highlights a technical, and thus atemporal, rationality that was assumed to be universally valid.¹⁰⁰ Correspondingly, the public administration learnt by Chinese students was presented like a nationwide progressive movement, which had made the US government as a whole more rationalized and efficient under the guidance of a consistent goal and a scientific rationality.¹⁰¹ Seen from this perspective, the nature of politics and administration could be largely reduced into numerous technical issues that should be handled by technicians rather than politicians. That is why, despite the fact that public administration in 1930s was somewhat disillusioned of fancy scientific administrative theories and their methods that involved all managerial realms of American society, science remained the undoubted foundation of legitimacy for public administrative scholars and its Chinese students. After the Progressive Era, public administration definitely lacked the ideation enthusiasm of the unrestrained pragmatics, such as John Dewey, who anticipated a full rationalization of public affairs that would be compatible with the real democratic participation.¹⁰² Nevertheless, by putting relatively more practical and technical emphasis on concrete administrative details, public administration in the post-Progressive Era as it was understood and introduced by the Chinese students to China became an even more professionalized highbrow discipline, and one that still reserved the potential to extend out to other social activities.

*xue bao (Journal of the Party School of CPC Ningbo)*3 (2012), 20-22.

¹⁰⁰ Guy B. Adams, "Enthralled with Modernity: the Historical Context of Knowledge and Theory Development in Public Administration," *Public Administration Review* 52 (4) (1992), 364. Jay D. White and Guy B. Adams ed. *Research in Public Administration: Reflection on Theory and Practice* (Thousands Oaks: Sage Publications, 1994), 49.

¹⁰¹ Zhang Jinjian, "Mei guo zhi xin zheng ge xin yun dong" (America's Administrative Reform Movement), *The Eastern Miscellany* 2(4) (1933), 25-29.

¹⁰² James A. Stever, *The End of Public Administration: Problems of the Profession in the Post-Progressive Era* (New York: Transnational Publishers, 1986) 18. 64.

To answer why public administration was so quickly embraced by China in the 1920s and 1930s, it is necessary to understand the historical conditions and political reality that prevailed during Republican China's first two decades.

The dream of establishing a parliamentary democracy, run by electorate officials and legislators, shattered soon after the Republic of China was established by a loose revolutionary league led by Sun Yat-sen in 1912. The Chinese state, both on the level of central and local government, remained firmly in the control of the old military and political elite, who had acquired their political understanding, capital, and habitus from late imperial times. Although some Western constitutional and institutional reforms were carried out, the government as the whole was still operated according to bureaucratic principles and procedures that had no significant difference from those that had developed over the last decade of the Qing Empire. This politic, which mixed a modern Western appearance with imperial Chinese content, would not exhaust the patience of public until 1919, when it proved incapable of protecting Chinese sovereignty from under the table deals as made by the Western great powers and Japan at the Paris Peace Conference. The demonstration launched by a few hundred of college students, intellectuals, and other citizens in Beijing on May 4th 1919 soon escalated into a nationwide political and cultural movement in which many social and political forces attempted to find a feasible way to save China from the yoke of warlordism and imperialism. Within a short space of time, the educated public saw democracy and science as the two most necessary ingredients that had to be injected into the inept old Chinese tradition and its political system in particular. The momentum of the May 4th Movement was sufficiently unstoppable that its political ideology was soon embraced by almost all political activists, including Sun Yat-sen, whose Nationalist Party had been marginalized during the first decade of the republic but then revitalized by the

movement. Although Sun Yat-sen remodeled his party according to the Soviet Leninist style so as to win support from Russia, he did show a clear intention to infuse the spirit of democracy and science into the political discourse of the Nationalist Party. Sun's adjustment to the new political climate can be found in a speech given to the party members in 1924. Sun Yat-sen defined politics, which in Chinese is a two-character noun, *zheng zhi*:

Zheng means affair of people; *zhi* means management; *zheng zhi* means the management of people's affair (政是眾人之事，治是管理；管理眾人之事就是政治)¹⁰³

This definition of politics bears the following political meanings. First of all, as opposed to the old politics, which was largely an enclosed field containing only a few cabals and cliques of politicians, the new *zheng zhi* is relevant to everyone. Given Sun's promise to train and then to give the Chinese people full political participation in national affairs, *zheng zhi* in the post May 4th movement apparently acknowledged this request for democracy. Second, by describing the new politics as a realm of management, Sun applied technical reason to people's affairs and thus rendered them manageable. It also implies, though more implicitly, the nonviolent, non-suppressive, and service-oriented nature of *zheng zhi*. The blatant and unlimited struggles for power and interest are no longer necessary, nor are they acceptable in the new politics. Neither are authoritarian and Machiavellian concerns of rule. If the meaning of *zheng* answers the demand for democracy, *zhi* echoes the dream of using science to solve political problems. In this way, Sun Yat-sen's concept of politics had already contained a certain susceptibility to American public administration, with which it shared similar democratic and scientific assumptions.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Sun Yat-sen, "San min zhu yi min quan zhu yi di yi jiang" (The First Lecture on People's right in Three People's Principles), March 9th 1924 <http://www.sunyat-sen.org:1980/b5/125.92.250.161/sundb/sundbzz/show.php?id=292>

¹⁰⁴ One important difference between Sun's *zheng zhi* and American public administration should be noted: Sun's people's affair can not be directly translated into public affair. The term "public" as scholars have pointed out, coming from the Western and American historical context bears the connotation of utilitarianism, liberalism and individualism. Public implies the acknowledgment of conflicting individual interests and the neutral or even

After Sun Yat-sen's death in 1925 and the seizure of the national regime by the Nationalist Party in 1928, Sun's political heritage and the appeal of May 4th Movement were both deified and distorted. On the one hand, the political discourse established by Sun Yat-sen, who himself was honored by the Party as the founding father of the Republic of China, became the secret ideological hallmark of the Nationalist Government. Sun Yat-sen's concepts, along with his words, had been widespread through state sponsored propaganda and education, as well through channels of civilian media. "Politics is the management of people's affair" became frequently quoted, both by people who defended it and those who disagreed with it. Facing questions and challenges from various political opponents who threatened the legitimacy of the new regime, the Nationalist Government had no choice but to consolidate Sun Yat-sen's status. On the other hand, many of Sun Yat-sen's claims were so impractical that the Nationalist Government had to suspend any promise of their fulfillment. The Party was especially troubled by Sun Yat-sen's ideal of giving the people a three-year-long political tutelage so as to help them become familiar with the rules and practices of democracy. Prolonging the period of this tutelage as long as possible was of vital importance to the survival and consolidation of the new regime. As a consequence, while Sun Yat-sen's definition of *zheng zhi* was firmly preserved and promoted, the part of *zhi* or management was particularly emphasized by the Nationalist Party as a way to shun requests for opening political participation and fulfilling true democracy. Thus, enhancing the ability of management was not only an ideological excuse but also a practical need. What the Nationalist regime wanted after 1928 was a politics of demobilization in which the Party put more and more weight on reforming the efficiency of the government, so as to deemphasize its democratic promise. By arguing that the Chinese people, who still kept ultimate sovereignty,

passive role of the government in public affair. See H. George Frederickson, *The Spirit of Public Administration* (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996), 21-25.

(*zheng quan* 政權) had authorized the Party's executive power (*zhi quan* 治權), the new regime maintained that its monopoly over the administrative branches of the state was totally legitimate and consistent with the principle of democracy.¹⁰⁵ The corollary of this official argument was that people always “own” the power (*quan* 權) while the government has the “ability” (*neng* 能), and thus the only matter left for discussion in *zheng zhi* was the improvement of management. In this context, the content of *zheng zhi* in the Nationalist China was intentionally revised to be very similar to, if not entirely synonymous with, American public administration in which politics was also intentionally deemphasized.

Just like the situation in the Progressive Era US, where both progressives and conservatives contributed to the birth of public administration, the Chinese intellectuals who were dissatisfied with the Party rule (*dong zhi* 黨治) argued just as hard as Nationalist supporters for an independent administrative state run by experts outside the realm of politics and ideological debate. They dreamt of a state free from the influence of unscrupulous politicians and rigid ideology. As one famous intellectual Luo Longji (羅隆基) cried out in an article:

My motto is: just administration; no ism (*zhi wen xin zheng, bu guan zhu yi*
只問行政, 不管主義)¹⁰⁶

Interestingly, this point of view was even backed by many core members of the Nationalist Party, who were trying to limit the arbitrary power of the upstart military leader Chiang Kai-shek and the power of his clique within the Nationalist regime.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Sun Yat-sen never explained how people could still hold the ultimate sovereignty of the state if all executive power including legislation and judicature had been entrusted to the Party.

¹⁰⁶ Luo Longji gained his Ph. D. in political science from The London School of Economics and Political Science. He was one of most active anti-Nationalist intellectual at the time. Luo had even been arrested by the Nationalist Party for his objection of the party rule. In the article, he purposefully used Sun Yat-sen's definition of *zhengzhi* and claimed “zhengzhi is administration.” See Luo Longji, “Zhuan jia zheng zhi” (The Politics of Expert), *Xin yue (Crescent)* 2(2) (1929), 16-17.

¹⁰⁷ Deng Lilan, “Nan jing zheng fu shi qi de zhuan jia zheng zhi lun: si chao yu shi jian” (The Technocracy during

Despite these realpolitik reasons, one should not underestimate the far-reaching impact of changes to the political paradigm, especially at a discursive level, after the May 4th Movement. The discursive power of democracy and science had made most people believe that the old politics must either be abandoned or significantly rationalized. People may well have entertained different views regarding what democracy and science meant, yet one thing is clear: after the May 4th Movement, and especially after its political vision had been adopted by the educated public, no politician in China could propose a persuasive political agenda without some democratic and scientific elements. Meanwhile, more courses of municipal administration became available at major Chinese universities. These courses were almost exclusively taught by men who had studied politics and public administration in the Progressive Era US. While some of these university professors did have a low opinion of the Nationalist regime, the majority of them lectured public administration due to their belief in the advanced political model rather than partisan concerns. Their teachings reflected a real collective wish that after years of meaningless strife among warlords and politicians who claimed themselves defenders of a certain version of constitution, it was high time to care less about politics at constitutional level and focus more on real governmental improvements at the executive level. As clearly expressed by the dean of the department of political science at National Beijing University, Zhang Zhongfu (張忠紱), the mainstream opinion in 1930s was:

Regardless of the Chinese or foreign states, the new or old political theories, the dictatorship, democracy or even the Soviet Union, as long as the administrative efficiency is not properly dealt with, [every political reform] is nothing more than an empty suit.

Only when we recognize this fundamental change of political attention can we understand why the Nationalist Government could further sponsor public administration well after the rise of

Nanjing Regime: Ideological Trend and Practices), *Tianjin she hui ke xue (Tianjin Social Science)* 2 (2002).

Chiang Kai-shek, who personally had a deep faith in authoritarianism and an innate dislike of the new mass politics that had ensured his top leadership. As I will show in the following passages, this shift also lies at the crux of the answer as to why the Central Politics School, which was initially founded by Chiang Kai-shek simply for political struggles, became the avant-garde ground of public administration and the cradle of modern administrators rather than party cadres.

The predecessor of the Central Politics School was the Nationalist Central Party Affair School (*Guomindang zhong yang dang wu xue xiao* 國民黨中央黨務學校), established by Chiang Kai-shek and his allies in Nanjing in 1927. This school had little purpose other than to back Chiang's weak claim to legitimate authority over the Nationalist Party, and to provide some cadres to assist Chiang in his political strife against other more reputed and senior Nationalist leaders. Among them, Wang Jingwei(汪精衛) was the toughest competitor for Chiang because Wang, as the closest and long time confidant of Sun Yat-sen, had both the political charisma and the reputation within and beyond the Nationalist Party. To fight such an enemy, Chiang Kai-shek, who had much weaker liaisons with the Party and its resources, could only count on himself to enlist enough political cadres to staff his regime. For these very real political factors, the Party Affair School was only a provisional institute to give young students a year of training before they were sent to take practical jobs in various political activities. For this reason, the core faculty of the school were not ordinary teachers but instructors (*zhi dao yuan* 指導員), who had the practical experience and skills necessary to train students to pursue political struggles and mobilization. Some of these instructors were trained at Moscow's Sun Yat-sen University, which was also a provisional institute set up by the Soviet Union in order to equip the Chinese with ideological and practical political knowledge. It might be reasonable to posit that those who did not receive this advanced training actually developed stronger political abilities and skills,

because it was such men who tended to be the most active party members, and who went on to survive numerous threats to their life during the revolution, all the while accumulating invaluable experience in organizing concrete political tasks. He Yangling (賀揚靈) is perhaps one of the most capable activists generated in such an indigenous context. Before the Nationalist Revolution, He Yangling had only been a regionally famous intellectual who wrote some poems and prose. However, during the revolution, He Yangling became an active member of the Nationalist right wing. As an Jiangxi native, He participated in the Anti-Bolshevik Corps (*AB fan chi tuan* AB 反赤團) to fight against the communist takeover of the Nationalist regime in the provincial capital of Nanchang at the end of 1926. Although the Anti-Bolshevik Corps did not achieve its goal in Jiangxi (He Yangling's father and brother were even killed by the communists in the process), the staunch position of the organization made it a symbol of the entire anti-communist wing of the Nationalist Party after the alliance between the Nationalist Party and Chinese Communist Party broke in April 1927. Therefore, the appearance of people like He Yangling and Duan Xipeng who was the leader of Anti-Bolshevik Corps and a major student leader of the May 4th Movement in the faculty of the Party Affair School delivered an unmistakable message of the political nature and mission of the school.¹⁰⁸

Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that although the Party Affair School was generated by the motive of realpolitik, it was a byproduct of the revolution stimulated by the May 4th Movement and the school already bore the trait of the new politics required by the times. While instructing its students in very practical political skills, such as how to manipulate the crowd, the school also had a social science curriculum taught by nationally famous university professors. The ideal that

¹⁰⁸ More details of the Party Affair School see Chen-cheng Wang, "Intellectuals and the One-party State in Nationalist China: the Case of Central Politics School (1927-1947)," *Modern Asian Studies* 48(6) (2014), 1789-1807.

party cadres should be not only “hit men” serving political bosses, but also potential social scientists or engineers who had a knowledge of science sufficient for modern state building, reflects the profound influence of this new political paradigm.

This political atmosphere provides a structural reason for us to understand why it was that after Chiang Kai-shek had improved his political status, the Party Affair School was renamed as the Central Politics School in early 1929. If the Party Affair School was an improvised organization set up in response to emergent political needs, the Central Politics School was soon reorganized into a formal institute which had to prove its legitimacy by consolidating rather than deriding new concepts of politics. This effort to legitimize the school would be completed by its new executive chief, Luo Jialun (羅家倫), in 1930. Luo Jianlun, as one of the most active intellectual leaders of the May 4th Movement, had dedicated himself to the spread of new political and cultural ideals over the course of 1920s. Just like many other intellectuals, Luo joined the Nationalist Party in order to fulfill the progressive principles of the movement. After the Party rose to national power, Luo was appointed to the post of chancellor of the National Qinghua University, which was arguably the best higher education institute in China in terms of academic reputation. Although Luo Jialun did not stay long at that position because of the political turmoil, he showed a strong motivation to reform Chinese politics by supporting academic research into politics in general and administration in particular. After he left Qinghua and took over responsibility of developing the Central Politics School, Luo wasted no time in continuing his reforms. Luo’s ambition of creating a new politics was so huge that he was no longer satisfied with emulating Qinghua, which in essence was a preparatory school funded by the US return of the Chinese Indemnity for the Boxer Uprising in order to cultivate future Chinese leaders, who would be financed by the returned indemnity to receive higher education in

the US. Luo wanted to take back the privilege of educating a new Chinese leadership at the advanced level. The Central Politics School should be a first class university that rivaled or even exceeded its counterparts in the US and Europe, capable of bearing the responsibility of training professional elite officials who would lead China according to objective and effective knowledge of social science rather than irrational partisan interests. In fact, Luo Jialun's ultimate model was L'Ecole Libre des Sciences Politiques in France, which allegedly resurrected the nation from the defeat of the Franco-Prussian War. Under Luo's supervision, new departments were established and staffed with real scholars who had formal degrees from foreign universities, rather than the incumbent party cadres who had comprised the majority of faculty in the Party Affair School. By emphasizing that politics should be an administrative profession, Luo Jialun actually made it possible, or even inevitable, for the Central Politics School to fully embrace public administration.

From then on scholars such as Jiang Kangli (江康黎), who got his masters degree in political science from Northwest University and wrote the first Chinese public administration monograph, were steadily recruited into the school's faculty. Despite the fact that the Central Politics School contained departments, such as diplomacy and journalism, which could not be categorized into the realm of public administration, according the course table and the memoirs of students, as I will indicate later in this chapter, the core of the school's education was unmistakably the curriculum of public administration.

For our purposes, however, it seems more beneficial to first get acquainted with the professors teaching at the school. The words and articles of these professors, after all, provide a means of better understanding the nature of the classes that they taught, and, therefore, the students who learnt from them.

Through the most part of the 1930s, the school's municipal administration was taught by Jiang Kangli. As the author of the first indigenous book of administrative studies, Jiang Kangli's points of view can be seen as quite representative of the type of public administration taught in the Central Politics School. Though we don't have the class notes or other materials directly related to his classes at the Central Politics School, by drawing from his articles and his *Principles of Administrative Studies* (行政學原理), we can still make some educated guesses as to what students actually learnt from him in the classroom.

Jiang Kangli pointed out in *Principles of Administrative Studies* in 1933:

The so-called administrative studies are a science of using the most economic and efficient way to cope with administrative affairs. It can also be said *zheng fu si wu guan li xue* (The Science of Public Administration).¹⁰⁹

It is noteworthy that Jiang Kangli translated "The Science of Public Administration" as *zheng fu shi wu guan li xue* (政府事務管理學) which, according to present day habit, is more close the meaning of managerial studies of governmental affairs. Considering that there was no standard translation for the term "public administration" in 1930s China, Jiang Kangli's translation perfectly reflects his (very accurate) understanding of US public administration during the same period. After the Progressive Era, the US public administration scholars did have a tendency to withdraw from more comprehensive municipal administration and narrow the realm of the discipline down to governmental or even office management.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Jiang Kangli's words are quoted from Yang Peilong, *zhong guo zao qi xin zheng xue shi: min guo shi qi xin zheng xue yan jiu* (China's Early History of Public Administration: the Research of Public Administration in the Republic of China) (Beijing: Social Science Academic Press, 2014), 108.

¹¹⁰ James A. Stever, *The End of Public Administration: Problems of the Profession in the Post-Progressive Era*, 64-65.

However, in another article “Administration and Polity” (行政與政制) published in 1934, Jiang Kangli announced his basic perspective of politics by quoting the following sentences of a poem taken from a Western public administration monograph; “For forms of government let fools contest / That which is best administered, is best.”¹¹¹ After purposing this central argument, Jiang Kangli quickly moved to emphasize the necessity of developing new administrative methods so as to handle problems generated in an industrialized urban context. This emphasis on municipal administration indicates the undoubted influence of the earlier underlying traditions of American public administration. Certainly, it is entirely understandable why Jiang Kangli used a more contemporary definition of the discipline in his monograph aimed at an audience of administrative professionals and experts, but discussed a more classic form of public administration in a journal article that targeted more ordinary readers. Be that as it may, Jiang Kangli’s judgments still indicate the different trends and dynamics within public administration as a discipline both in the US and China. As mentioned above, the retreat of US public administration was a logical response to the previous over-theorized approach, which in turn had been a consequence of restricted access to insider administrative data and knowhow. In China, on the contrary, public administration was introduced in a context in which the passion for governmental expansion in terms of size and function was unprecedented and not yet started to fade. Under the circumstances, it would have been weird for Jiang Kangli to insist on the latest traits of the discipline that had not lasted in the US any longer than a decade, but to not readopt a tradition that was still very much alive and seemingly more suitable for the political needs of the China.

¹¹¹ Jiang Kangli, “Xin zheng yu zheng zhi” (Administration and Polity), *Shi fei gong lun (The Public Opinion of Justice)* 8 (1936), 20.

One can not help but sense an aspect of irrelevance about Jiang's public administration in respect to early 20th century China, which remained a predominantly rural society despite the rapid industrialization and urbanization that was happening around a few big coastal cities and treaty ports. Today, one may say that this neglect of the countryside was a premonition of the Nationalist regime's failure to comprehend the needs and potential of rural China. However, in 1930s it seemed natural that foreign educated scholars, who had first hand experience of the desirability of modern urban life abroad and still lived in cities back home, to expect and facilitate the unfolding of most "advanced" municipal administration in the built up areas of China. Witnessing the urban prosperity of the Progressive Era, they had little reason to believe that history henceforth would be pushed by a backlash from backward rural areas where people were most acutely victimized by modernity, as opposed to the universal expansion of modern political and social life from a few cities to the rest of China.

Jiang Kangli might have noticed that discussing municipal administration could sometimes be unrealistic, given the rarity of real cities that were independent from the countryside. While admitting to the absurdity of establishing municipal governments to manage rural administration, Jiang Kangli thought it totally feasible to enrich the municipal function of traditional county government so as to let it administer both urban and rural areas in its jurisdiction. He speculated that with enough time, the entire county would be administratively and economically urbanized and thus become a full-fledged city by the skills and services of municipal government.¹¹² Since the entirety of society would be modernized sooner or later, the issue of whether or not rural communities had their unique needs served by an administration designed for urban civil society

¹¹² Jiang Kangli, "Wo guo shi zheng wen ti" (On Municipal Administration in Our Country), *She hui dao bao (The Guidance of Society)* 1(6) (1932), 6-9.

did not bother him. Jiang Kangli apparently shared a similar perspective to Woodrow Wilson, insofar that public administration could be applied anywhere.

Once the shadow of a dismayed rural China was dispelled by the faith of a linear and unitary approach to modernization, public administration scholars like Jiang Kangli did not see any reason not to promote the most efficient, scientific methods within the entire realm of governmental affairs. As he argued in another article published in *Administrative Studies*, “the fundamental of fundamentals” of the discipline is;

With the spirit of studying **natural science** (my emphasis) as well as sincere and objective attitude, according to facts, relying on professionals and organized effort, [the goal of the discipline is] to economize and optimize the governmental administration by pursuing the improvement of it.¹¹³

See from this quotation, it is safe to say that Jiang Kangli was a loyal disciple of his precursors and counterparts in the United States. The administration envisioned by him is scientific, technical, efficiency-oriented, and seemingly apolitical. In consequence, Jiang Kangli could only focus on executive details in the field of administration; these ranged from how to manage vehicles and airfields and the maintenance of streets to charity management and the united logistic purchase of the government. All these issues could and should be solved by technical measures. Guided by this mind of technocracy, Jiang Kangli tended to see those aged political predicaments, such as corruption and the inability of fiscally stretched local governments, as issues that could be fixed by proper institutional and procedural adjustment. For instance, on the question as to whether the county should be an autonomous unit as prescribed by Sun Yat-sen, whose plan of state-building had been widely questioned by the contemporaries as infeasible by 1930s,¹¹⁴ Jiang Kangli showed no interest of joining the political debate over the possibility of a

¹¹³ Jiang Kangli, “Guan yu xin zheng xiao lu yan jiu hui zhi wo jian” (My Comments on the Association of Administrative Efficiency Research), *Xin zheng yan jiu (Administrative Studies)* 1 (1934), 28.

¹¹⁴ Sun Yat-sen’s idea of local autonomy changed over time. It first appeared in Sun’s words in 1897 and had

bottom up democracy. Instead, he simply assumed that county autonomy was a mission required by the current law, and discussed how to revise institutions so as to give the county magistrate full authority of personnel and the finances to fulfill such autonomy. According to his theory, giving personnel and financial power to a magistrate who was appointed by the authorities rather than by popular mandate gave that magistrate no excuse to delay, or to not assume full responsibility for the promotion of county autonomy.¹¹⁵ Jiang's argument is convincing, if we agree that county autonomy is an administrative task irrelevant to any national and local political agenda. In fact, one can infer from Jiang Kangli's article that he disapproved of the Nationalist Party's realistic attempts to overrule Sun Yat-sen's idealist agenda of rapid democratization. In this regard, just like his counterparts in the US, Jiang Kangli's choice to take a technical or institutional approach to solving political problems was not as apolitical as it seems at first glance. Jiang Kangli was arguing that the problem was not politics, but the determination to enforce certain requirements generated by politics. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that Jiang's perspective represents a political view that refuses to recognize the complexity of Chinese political reality.

Jiang Kangli was not alone in this politics of depoliticization. Another Central Politics School professor, Xue Bokang (薛伯康), who had received his masters degree in business management from Washington Seattle University, also bore clear traits of technically-oriented American public administration. Xue's specialty was personnel administration, which was

different meanings through the first two decades of the 20th century. The English translation "local autonomy," therefore, only catches a part of what Sun called *di fang zi zhi* (地方自治) in a given time. Even the last version of local autonomy proposed in the final years of Sun's life was still ambiguous. It seemed close to the mixture of county level democracy and some autonomy from upper governments. See Zeng Jingzhong, "Sun Zhongsheng di fang zi zhi si xiang shu lun" (Sun Yat-sen's Thoughts of Local Autonomy), *Sun Zhongsheng he ta de shi dai* (*Sun Yat-sen and His Time*) (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1989).

¹¹⁵ Jiang Kangli, "Di fang zheng fu zhi du zhi jian li de wen ti" (On the Establishment of the Institution of Local Government), *She hui dao bao* 1(7) (1932), 3-5

essentially the only subfield of public administration other than municipal management in 1930s. At the same time, Xue was the author of two books on personnel administration that, at the time, were the most authoritative, if not the only, books discussing issues of personnel administration. For this reason, the fact that many of Jiang Kangli's perspectives were shared by Xue Bokang can be seen not only as a reflection of the characteristics of public administration education in the Central Politics School, but also as representative of the community of public administration in China at the time.

In an article named "My Opinion of Chinese Municipal Administration," Xue Bokang proposed a quite radical agenda for reforming China. He argued that the strength of a nation can be evaluated by how many cities it has: the more cities it has, the stronger it is. In a similar vein, the number of municipal governments was also considered by Xue as a reliable exponent of the development of a county. For him, municipal government was the only efficient and advanced form of governance. As long as there is a municipal government, be it but a small one with only two officials and four councilors, the public life will be properly managed.¹¹⁶ Xue's unique definition of municipal government demonstrates his deep dissatisfaction for traditional Chinese local governmental form, *xian* (縣, county). He believed that municipal government was set for serving people, while the county government was only the executive end of a provincial or central government. Xue's major complaints were aimed at the poor ability and simple organization of Chinese local government. Of course, one can argue that merely establishing new governmental apparatuses that bore the name of "municipal government" would not solve the problems of Chinese local government. Without the sufficient financial and personnel resources, no real improvements would be made irrespective of the local government's official name.

¹¹⁶ Xue Bokang, "Dui yu zhong guo shi zheng de guan gan" (My Opinion of Chinese Municipal Administration), *Zheng wen zhou kan* (*The Weekly of Political Quest*) 37 (1936), 29.

Certainly, other public administration scholars, such as Jiang Kangli, might have been hard pushed to accept Xue Bokang's argument, as the former had actually criticized the blind pursuit of municipal administration.¹¹⁷ However, the repeated references to radical, and perhaps even naive, gospels of municipal administration in journals issued for intellectual readers can be seen as indirect evidence of how widespread the high expectations were when it came to new administrative skills and the services of advanced countries among the educated Chinese public.

As for his own specialty, personnel administration, Xue Bokang's standpoint was more sophisticated. Even so, the optimistic view of scientific and technical approaches to the improvement of politics remained the main theme through his works. More specifically, it was the principles and practices adopted by American businesses that were held up as the best models of personnel management. In Xue's opinion, although governmental administration was different in many aspects from business management, the most ideal, scientific, and efficient way to solve the problems of finding, using, and evaluating governmental employees was to emulate those principles and practices found in American companies. For Xue, the non-profit, political, and monopolistic nature of public administration were unfortunate characteristics rather than legitimate reasons that kept the government unbusinesslike. Moreover, Xue's perspective shows obvious signs of the behaviorism that would come to dominate the US (and, in a sense, social sciences around the world) well into the last quarter of the 20th century. He claimed the high relevance of personnel administration to "criminology, dactylography, physiology, hygiene, psychiatry, sociology, psychology, and statistics."¹¹⁸ By numerating the concrete potential application of all these subjects, Xue Bokang was arguing for the absolute scientific nature of

¹¹⁷ Jiang Kangli, "Dui yu xian shi fen zhi de yi ge yi jian" (An Opinion regarding the Division of Administration between County and City), *Shi zheng ping lun (Municipal Review)* 4(10) (1936), 9-10.

¹¹⁸ Xue Bokang, "Ren shi xin zheng yu zheng zhi xiao lu" (Personnel Administration and Political Efficiency), *Guo heng (The Measure of State)* 1(4) (1935), 15.

personnel administration in particular and public administration in general. One can infer from his argument that human beings, official functionaries and ordinary people alike, can all be understood, motivated, and controlled by objective and universal principles or mechanisms. In this sense, Xue Bokang, just like many other proponents of Western knowledge, did not feel obliged to take any indigenous cultural factors into account, even though he opened his article by quoting the aphorism of the great Song historian and statesman Sima Guang (1019-1086): “Nothing is more important for governance than having good people; good people lead to competent officialdom, and competent officialdom makes all things in order.”¹¹⁹ While Sima Guang tried to argue for the indispensability of human factors in politics, Xue and his contemporaries instead came to appreciate an administrative world in which everything, including its participants, followed a set of impersonal scientific rules that were universal and timeless.

One can thus conclude that the public administration explicated by Jiang Kangli and Xue Bokang sufficiently embodied the technical, scientific, ahistorical and apolitical traits of its American source. It paid little attention to historical and cultural elements in defining the goals of politics and administration. However, it would be reductive to assume that Jiang and Xue were merely the passive followers of foreign knowledge. One only needs to look at how Xue Bokang utilized Sun Yat-sen’s Constitution of Five Powers (*Wu quan xian fa* 五權憲法) to defy the Nationalist Party’s political monopoly and get at the clear political position behind his seemingly pure scientific language. The Constitution of Five Powers was designed by Sun Yat-sen as an attempt to solve the inefficiency and partisanship innate in the Western constitutional framework of the separation of three powers. By dividing the power of personnel from

¹¹⁹ Xue Bokang, “Ren shi xin zheng yu zheng zhi xiao lu,” 12

administration, and that of investigation and impeachment from legislation, Sun believed that he could create a perfect polity that would be totally rational because the government would be run and examined by people who represented the absolutely impartial third part outside of the partisan groups competing for power. Sun's version of democracy, as Xue Bokang and many contemporaries pointed out, was entirely utopian and without any theoretical or practical foundation. Nevertheless, Xue was willing to endorse the constitutional design that "it seems proper to temporarily deny administrative institutes the right of personnel appointment," since the current politics was corrupt.¹²⁰ To further prevent the Nationalist Party from intervening in personal administration, Xue did not forget to remind his readers in his monograph that even fascist Italy maintained a neutral civil service.¹²¹ In this sense, just like their American counterparts, Chinese public administrative scholars did not embrace or create a kind of political scientism without reflexive thinking and political consideration. That beings said, from the beginning they lacked an interest in understanding and handling realpolitik, because they believed that realpolitik would be unavoidably replaced by regular and scientific administration.

Was there anything beyond the unilateral perspective of a few America-trained scholars? Were there other opinions inside the Central Politics School? To answer these questions, I will examine the ideals of politics and administration held by other Central Politics School professors. The findings indicate that although different approaches to understanding the political reality of China did exist, the impetus to rescue administration from dirty politics with rationalized logic was indeed a general will shared by the majority of faculty.

Though also a scholar of administration, Liu Baimin (劉百閔) received his education from Japan, where studies of administration were deeply influenced by the European tradition that

¹²⁰ Xue Bokang, *ren shi xin zheng da gang* (*The Outline of Personnel Administration*) (Nanjing: Zhengzhong Bookstore, 1936), 19-20.

¹²¹ Xue Bokang, *ren shi xin zheng da gang*, 21.

mainly considered administration as a branch of jurisprudence. Compared to ahistorical analyses after the American style, Liu's comprehension of administration was formed in critical retrospect to administrative forms and social changes. Liu followed the viewpoint of Japanese scholars who traced the birth of modern administration all the way back to 17th century Germany, where the predecessors of modern administration, cameralism, and poliseistaat studies were generated. Liu, therefore, viewed administration within the context of the development of European absolutism. In this narrative, administration was never separate from the ruler's practical concerns of maintaining power. On this line of thinking, for instance, Liu Baimin was able to put scholarship like Kant's political philosophy into a political context whereby the demands of civil society were reconciled with absolutism.¹²² Correspondently, Liu's understanding of administration was anything but a science which, he argued, had only been developed at the end of the 19th century because of industrialization. Instead, Liu Baimin knew that the form of administration changed according to the needs of the ruler, not vice versa. By the same token, he showed critical abilities that were not so obvious in Jiang and Xue's works. For example, Liu pointedly revealed why the jurisprudence tendency of German administration was enhanced, and how it inhibited historical and political approaches to administrative studies.¹²³ However, despite his European/Japanese educational background and his much stronger sense of historical consciousness, Liu Baimin did not reject American public administration. On the contrary, after comparing administrative studies on both sides of the Atlantic, Liu Baimin could not help but appreciate the American approach that put almost exclusive emphasis on concrete technical problems and their scientific solutions. While realizing that abstract principles have only limited use in real administrative procedures, Liu apparently felt that there was nothing wrong with "scientizing" administration.

¹²² Liu Baimin, "Xin zheng xue zhi shi de fa zhan" (The Historical Development of Administrative Studies), *Zhong guo qing nian (The Chinese Youth)* 8(1) (1943), 25.

¹²³ Liu Baimin, "Xin zheng xue zhi shi de fa zhan," 26.

At a time when the power and benefit of science was widely praised as the source of Western prosperity, Liu Baimin's identity with public administration rather than administrative jurisprudence is but one sign of the general intellectual atmosphere that pervaded around the world.

Certainly, there were professors who disagreed with the "scientization" of politics and administration. The perspective of Sa Mengwu (薩孟武) is worth analyzing. Sa Mengwu received his education of political science at the Imperial University at Kyoto, and was the most senior professor at the Central Politics School. Sa Mengwu's scholarship was based on a profound understanding of Chinese political thought and history, and is seen by many Chinese scholars today as important and creative. Unlike those public administrative scholars who got their degrees and went back to China after 1930, Sa Mengwu had participated in the Nationalist Revolution before the Nationalist Party rose to power in 1928. Therefore, Sa Mengwu had first hand experience of realpolitik and revolution. This experience, in addition to his academic approach, made him distrust the new science of public administration. In a speech given to students of Central Politics School, Sa Mengwu explicated his own ideal of the principle of administration by further defining Sun Yat-sen's concept of *zheng zhi*. He stated:

Who are administrators? Since *zheng zhi* means the management of peoples' affairs, administrators are those who manage peoples' affairs. What are peoples' affairs? Peoples' affairs are what is considered by ordinary people to be the most important. The most important thing to ordinary people concern everyday life: eating, clothing, housing, and moving(食衣住行).¹²⁴

In Sa's point of view, the distinction between politics and administration is apparently meaningless because neither *zheng zhi* nor its execution is limited to the management of administrative sectors. Given that administration is, by definition, the need to deal with ordinary

¹²⁴ Sa Mengwu, "Xin zheng yao ze" (The Principle of Administration), *Fuwu (Service)* (4), (1940) 13.

people, Sa Mengwu maintained that the most important quality of administrators is a sound sense of everyday life, or so-called common sense. The endeavor of administrators is more like physicians than scientists, insofar that no universal rule can be applied to diagnose and treat every patient (or administrative task). Throughout his speech, Sa Mengwu never said a word about science or mechanisms in administration. Rather, he emphasized again and again that what administrators need most is not professional knowledge, but a clear sense of reality. As a consequence, he also held very different views on specific issues within the subfield of administration. “Since there are experts of personnel administration,” Sa Mengwu said in his speech, “I don’t want to talk about it.” By mentioning this rising science only in passing, Sa Mengwu effectively dismissed the value of Xue Bokang’s specialty. All Sa talked about was some (traditional) wisdom of understanding, and the importance of using people rather than modern knowledge in order to optimize the utility of “human resources”. Similarly, Sa Mengwu did not pursue any further specification of bureaucracy. Instead, he emphasized the importance of simplifying organization and saving personnel expenditure, another lesson that he had learnt from Chinese history rather than science.

Be that as it may, Sa Mengwu could not really influence the overall policy of the school. Those who had the power of hiring teachers in general welcomed the scientization of the school’s curriculum. To take Mei Siping (梅思平) as an example; a man who had been the chief of teaching affairs and the first dean of the Central Politics School’s department of administration before he took charge of finding ideal teachers during the school’s first few years. Allegedly, he would stand at the rear of classroom to observe the students’ responses and decide whether the new professor should be hired. Both Jiang Kangli and Xue Bokang were hired due to his approval. As such, it is safe to say that Mei was responsible for the introduction and

consolidation of public administration in the Central Politics School. As he proudly claimed in front of the whole school in a speech, the curriculum provided in the school rivaled first class universities in terms of the quality of social sciences and theory. By his reckoning, this social science education alone had already help the school's graduates make most of the correct policies and decisions.¹²⁵ Certainly, the speech bears the color of self-congratulation. However, he stated that the stronghold of ordinary university students was the possession of abstract theoretical knowledge, which was also held by his own Politics School students, whose own special attribute was hard work. In doing so, Mei Siping, a graduate of Beijing University, was taking a political formula for granted: abstruse scientific education plus painstaking implementation is equal to successful administration. In other words, the point is to carry out the potential of administrative science, which already contains all solutions to real problems. Later, we will see how Mei Siping and his students attempted to fulfill this political formula when he was appointed magistrate of the Jiangning Experimental County of Autonomy (*Jiangning zi zhi shi yan xian* 江寧自治實驗縣).

Arguably, the popular points of scientific public administration did not pass through without question, as many intellectuals found these fashioned ideals void, rigid, and impractical. As one administrative scholar pointed out in a book review, most works in the field were half translations and half independent researches. Apart from following the analytical framework provided by American scholars who unexceptionally divided public administration into organization, personnel, material logistics, and finance, few writers delved into the real problems, theoretical or practical, in the context of Chinese society and politics.¹²⁶ Nevertheless, even this

¹²⁵ Mei Siping, "Ben xiao jiao yu zhi cheng gong" (The Success of Our School's Education), *Zhong yang zheng zhi xue xiao xiao kan* (*The School Journal of Central Politics School*) 62 (1933), 11.

¹²⁶ Xie Tingshi, "Xin zheng xue de fan chou" (The Category of Administrative Studies), *Xin zheng yan jiu* 2(7) (1937), 734.

particular scholar who had a low opinion of the levels of public administration research in China did not refute the authority of Western scholars, still less the science behind it per se. In other words, people might debate over what administrative theories and practices were most scientific, but would not go so far as to question whether public administration as a science really was a good conceptual framework for the Chinese to understand and solve their own political and administrative problems. Zhang Jinjian, a graduate of Party Affair School who had earned his masters degree from Stanford University in 1935 with a thesis on American municipal governments and would later become the dean of the department of administration at the Central Politics School in 1937, stated in a 1935 article:

In the past, anyone who comprehended smooth literary expression and a little experience could be an official. But today, because of the amazing progress of scientific invention, not only all kinds of equipment used by the present day government... but also the content of governmental work has been totally scientized. Things like public health, highways, and railroad building are certainly professional knowledge. Governmental statistics and auditing can also be done only by specially trained personnel... For this reason, the ordinary people politics of the past has to gradually give over to the expert politics.¹²⁷

To sum up, under the guidance of Mei Siping and other proponents of administrative science, the Central Politics School soon became the cradle of professional administrators. A list of graduates of the school's second class indicates the dominant status of American public administration. Among seventy three graduates, twenty nine came from the municipal

¹²⁷ Zhang Jinjian, "Shi jie zheng zhi zhi xin dong xiang" (The New Trend of World Politics), *Guo heng* 1(2) (1935), 21. After returning to China, Zhang Jinjian was soon hired by Naikai University in 1936 to teach and study administration there. The university's program of administrative studies then was directly financed by Rockefeller Foundation. According to Zhang Jinjian's memoir, through his life, no other Chinese universities had the same delicate and comfort environment for scholars to do their researches. Probably due to this resource base, Zhang Jinjian could pursue field work in Guizhou and published articles which won him a reputation among Central Politics School students who protested the management of the school in 1937 and asked the authorities to hire Zhang Jinjian. As a consequence, Zhang Jingjian would become the dean of the department of administration through the entire 1940s. Zhang Jingjian's experience provides us a valuable case to see how American intellectual and financial resources promoted the spread and legitimization of public administration in China, See Zhang Jingjian, *Mingcheng qi shi zi shu (The Autobiography of Mingcheng at Age Seventy)* (Taipei: Chinese Society for Public Administration, 1972), 219-223.

administration section and one from the general administration of the department of administration. Despite the fact that the department of finance formed the largest group of graduates (thirty one), thirty of them belonged to the fiscal administration section of the department (the other one hailed from the finance section which concerned banking). Essentially, these people were trained to establish modern financial systems, which were considered to be an integral part of the government as envisioned by public administration scholars. In fact, except for the ten graduates from the department of diplomacy, the other sixty-three graduates could all be assigned to municipal governments, if there were so many administrative units of this kind.¹²⁸ The distribution of these graduates once again testifies to the unmistakable municipal orientation of American public administration.

A consideration of the core curriculum's more concrete aspects further demonstrates the ethos of students who received such a public administration education.

According to the school's 1932 curriculum (the earliest extant version I can find), students in the department of administration, in both general and municipal sections, started off by taking classes in municipal administration, finance, and statistics in the second year of their four year long program. For the municipal section (*Shi zheng zu* 市政組) students, they would go on to take required courses such as local government, local finance, police administration, economics of public facility (*Gong yin shi ye jing ji* 公營事業經濟) and public hygienic administration in

¹²⁸ “Da xue bu di er qi ge zu xue sheng xing ming” (The Name list of Graduates from all Sections of the Second Class), *Zhong yang zheng zhi xue xiao xiao kan* 68 (1933) 2. Due to limited resources, we only know that sometime in the 1930s the general administration section replaced the municipal section and became the biggest major in the Central Politics School. According to the memoir of Yang Jingning who entered the general administration section in the department of administration in 1932, the municipal section was not operative. However, according to the 1932 curriculum of the Central Politics School, the municipal section was still there. It seems unlikely that the school closed the section but listed its curriculum at the same time. However, if his recall is correct, it would be interesting to further ask why the municipal section was already no longer in operation in 1932. A possible explanation may be that the school authorities realized the ridiculousness of maintaining such a section in a country where only a few municipal governments were established and sustainable. See Yang Jingnian, *ji yi shu huai* (*The Autobiography at Age Eighty*) (Tianjing: Nankai University Press, 2007), 15.

their third year, and social administration, urban planning, labor law, and issues of municipal administration in the final year. Looking at this curriculum, it is evident that the department of administration in the Central Politics School, though also providing many courses common in other universities' departments of political science, was public administration-oriented. For this reason, the vagueness of early public administration as a profession is also clearly exposed. To take the general administration section (*Pu tong xing zheng zu* 普通行政組) as an example, students took required or selective courses, from administrative law through to accounting, with their classmates in other departments. Sometimes, it is hard to figure out the focal point of the general administration section, which seemed to contain all dimension of administration and politics.¹²⁹ The situation in the rural administration section (*Xiang cun xing zheng zu* 鄉村行政組) in the department of administration represented another tendency of early public administration: to pose as professional administrators in all realms of human life. Except for classes like rural autonomy (*xiang cun zi zhi* 鄉村自治), rural policy, and local educational administration, which were more or less relevant to the ideal of rural administration according to conventional wisdom, the required courses taken by the section's students were more similar to those taught in present day agronomy colleges.¹³⁰ These were forestry, farm management, zootechnics, agrology, entomology, fertilizer science and phytopathology.¹³¹ One cannot help but wonder if comprehending such a wide variety of knowledge was really necessary or useful for a rural administrator.¹³²

¹²⁹ Yang Peilong, *zhong guo zao qi xin zheng xue shi: min guo shi qi xin zheng xue yan jiu*, 83-84.

¹³⁰ Again, in 1932, rural autonomy should still bear both Sun Yat-sen's vague idea of *di fang zi zhi* and the self governance preferred by Chiang Kai-shek.

¹³¹ The curriculum is quoted from Cui Mingzhong, *guo min dang zhong yang zheng zhi xue xiao zhi yan jiu* (*The Research of the Nationalist Party Central Politics School*) (Taipei: National Chengchi University Master Degree Dissertation, 1997), 249.

¹³² It is totally reasonable to doubt if those students did have the time and energy to comprehend such a wide range

The hegemony of public administration was not limited to the department of administration; its influence can also be evidenced in other departments. Efforts to standardize the political process gave birth not only to the department of administration, but also to the department of finance (*Cai zheng xi* 財政系) which was probably the first one to be independent from the department of economics (*Jing ji xi* 經濟系) in China.¹³³ The department of finance was, by nature, a ground to train financial staff, such as accountants and statisticians, to run the public administration. Students in the department were expected to guide the government's use of its financial resources in a measurable, efficient, and economic manner. For instance, students in the financial administration section of the department were required to take comprehensive professional courses including budgeting, currency and banking, governmental bonds, tariffs, taxation systems, local finance, auditing, land, and salt tax. Again, this design of curriculum reflected the ambitious but essentially overbroad vision of early public administration.

One thing is particularly noteworthy. The department of finance was the original site of deviation from the orthodox conceptual framework of public administration. The fiscal needs of the government forced teachers and students in the department to be more pragmatic. The department's first and foremost priority - the reason for their very existence, - was not the level of administrative rationalization. Rather, it was the matter of how to get money from Chinese society that held proportions of life and death. On account of this, as I will further demonstrate later in this chapter, people in the department of finance became the first group at the school to approach rural administration and tax collection in areas without modern infrastructure seriously.

of knowledge. Nor was it likely that the Central Politics School had the faculty to teach so many different disciplines. A very possible explanation may be that despite their formidable professional names, all those classes were only general education courses that did not require full dedication of students.

¹³³ Liu Zhifan, "Da xue bu cai zheng xi" (The Department of Finance at Central Politics School), *Guo li zheng zhi da xue xiao shi shi liao xuan ji* (*The Selective Collection of Historical Sources of National Chengchi University*) 1 (Taipei: The Office of Principal, 1973), 224.

The students in the department, though small in number, were destined to play a larger administrative responsibility in the later period, even though their initial identity was little more than coffer keepers.¹³⁴

The immature nature of public administration can also be evidenced throughout the school's other departments. For example, scientific methodology (*Ke xue fang fa* 科學方法) and scientific management (*Ke xue guan li* 科學管理) were selective courses for many departments. Only the statistics section in the department of social economics (*She hui jing ji xi tong ji zu* 社會經濟系統計組) put both classes in its required courses. More interestingly, students in the statistics section were required to take household investigation (*Hu kou diao cha* 戶口調查), which was not to be found in the curriculum of any other units in the school. A similar phenomenon can also be observed in the public facility section (*Gong yong zu* 公用組) of the department of social economics, which shared a lot of required courses with the municipal section in the department of administration, including municipal administration, urban planning, and economics of public facilities. In some sense, the public facility section was administratively more practical because its required courses contained the management of public facilities (*Gong yong guan li* 公用管理), scientific management, comparative studies of public service in other countries (*Ge guo gong yong shi ye bi jiao* 各國公用事業比較) and gas and running water (*Mei qi yu zi lai shui* 煤氣與自來水). None of these highly specified courses were taught in the municipal section, which is supposed (to the modern mind) to be the one most familiar with the concrete management of such urban infrastructures.¹³⁵ Why the statistics and public facility section had a stronger commitment to scientific methods and practical municipal management than other sections in

¹³⁴ According to the memoir of a finance student, the students enlisted into the department of finance were rarely over 30 people.

¹³⁵ Cui Mingzhong, *guo min dang zhong yang zheng zhi xue xiao zhi yan jiu*, 248-253.

other departments, like the municipal administration section that seemed much more civil service oriented, is not entirely clear. To put forward an educated guess, the designers of the curriculum in different sections might well have had varied understanding of the nature of public administration and its potential range. Therefore, even though there must have been a certain extent of compromise and coordination within the school, these designers were still obliged to compete with each other in order to acquire a larger share of the subfield within the discipline, and indeed, the school. For example, the professor who set the curriculum of the department of social economics might well believe that by adding more classes relevant to the preciseness of modern science, he could effectively enhance the legitimacy of the so-called social economics, which was otherwise a dubious subfield with ambiguous political connotations.¹³⁶ In other words, instating scientific methodology and management as required courses was a political gesture designed to fortify the professional turf. Similarly, it was tempting for the curriculum designer to create and occupy the course “household investigation” so as to preempt the profession of statistics asserting a monopoly over administrative tasks, which were intentionally defined by the curriculum designer as purely technical, statistical, and scientific. The overtly practical curriculum of the public facility section can also be understood within this context of legitimacy gaining. The strategy of the public facility section was to monopolize the technical management

¹³⁶ The ideal of social economics, on the one hand, still bore the radical color of socialist revolution which had aimed at founding a non-capitalistic economy. On the other, with the rise of Chiang Kai-shek and his right wing Nationalist allies, the ideal of social economics was invented to differentiate the regime’s more conservative political and economic ideology from communism which had provided a major momentum for the Nationalist Party. In the new political atmosphere, the department of social economics was supposed to promote nationwide cooperative movement (合作運動) among all social strata to deny the necessity of fierce class struggle. However, compared to the century long rich legacy of Marxism, the cooperative movement had very questionable credibility and feasibility even though the department of social economics had the largest faculty when the Central Politics School was just established. As mocked by Sa Mengwu, the cooperative movement promoted by the department of social economics was only about “all for one”(人人爲我) rather than “one for all.”(我爲人人). See Sa Mengwu, *zhong nian shi dai (My Middle Age)* (Taipei: Sanmin Book Company, 2005), 39. Shou Miancheng, “Chen Guofu yu guo min dang de he zuo yun dong” (Chen Guofu and the Nationalist Party’s Cooperative Movement), *Wen shi zi liao xuan ji he ding ben (The Combined Selective Collection of Historical and Literary Materials)* 80, (Beijing: Chinese Literature and History Press, 1999), 362.

of public facilities in city engineering branches, while “invading” the more general administrative units that were supposedly owned by the municipal section. The tension among subfields is evident within public administration. The more technical subfields had a tendency to exclude and challenge the guiding authority of more general, managerial, and humanistic ones. The seemingly ridiculous speculation by the curriculum designer from the department of social economics reminds us that boundaries between different professions are never formed naturally and apolitically. The demarcation of professions in public administration, as they are in other occupational or academic fields, was in fact caused by many deliberate or even conspiratorial factors. In addition, one can sense from the 1932 curriculum that almost three years after the establishment of the Central Politics School, the school authorities still had little idea of what exactly public administration should be. Since few professors had practical administrative experience, and thus did not know what students would need in the world of real administrative work, to put as much supposedly useful knowledge into the curriculum as they could was the only rational choice. Thus, in this case, the process of professionalization does not necessarily mean an increase in knowledge, confidence, and rationalization within a discipline.

Chen Guofu, one of the founding members and actual power holder of the school, had long been dissatisfied with the academic development of the curriculum. Controlling the key organizational and personnel resources of the Nationalist Party, he and his brother Chen Lifu were the most vehement promoters of the party’s political monopoly. Chen Guofu saw very clearly that the education at the Central Politics School had become disconnected from the practical need of the Nationalist Party. The Party did not need a bunch of university graduates who had been taught to run a type of government that did not exist in China. What the regime really needed were staunch party cadres who had the experience and ability to stabilize the

Nationalist's thin political coverage through local society. As such, Chen put forward an agenda to recalibrate the school at the end of 1935. He abolished the undergraduate curriculum, meaning that the school thereafter would only enlist and provide a two-year education for people who had already received undergraduate degrees and passed the advanced civil service exams (*Gao kao* 高考).¹³⁷ By so doing, Chen hoped that the Party could acquire real personnel who had a rich social and political experience, rather than teenagers who knew nothing outside of studying textbooks. Had this agenda been approved by Chiang Kai-shek, the Central Politics School would have become an institute for training incumbent high level civil servants. However, conflict interrupted in 1937, and the War of Resistance against Japan meant that Chen Guofu's agenda was adjourned sine die because of the need to win youth support. At this point, one can see the full power of discourse. Even though many Nationalist politicians, including Chiang Kai-shek and his close ally Chen Guofu, were both disciples and masters of realpolitik, and had no faith in the assumptions and principles on which public administration was formed, they had to tolerate and finance such an institute within the regime. The influence of this May 4th discourse would endure well into 1940s, and act as a political reality that conditioned the thoughts and behaviors of people who participated in the so-called political realm. This was particularly the case for the graduates of the Central Politics School who would find that what they learnt in school had little use in local realities. However the overall discourse of the times provided no other intellectual resources for them to develop alternative practical approaches over a short period of time.

The problems of public administration education of Central Politics School were acutely exposed when the school's students were assigned to individual governmental units. This

¹³⁷ Chen Guofu, "Zhong yang zheng zhi xue xiao gai jin ji hua shu" (The Proposal of the Improvement of Central Politics School), *Chen Guofu xian sheng quan ji* (*Complete Works of Chen Guofu*) 1 (Taipei: Zhengzhong Bookstore, 1952), 198-200.

internship was a necessary stage before formal graduation, and usually lasted for four months. During the first couple of months, interns were usually sent to provincial governments in order to gain some comprehension of the overall state of Chinese local government. Based on a similar logic, interns were not assigned to a single position through the first two months. Instead, they usually started by being an attendant in the secretary office, where documents from all departments were collected and redistributed. Interns were expected to make the most of the opportunity to get to know the general process of administration. Then, after one or two weeks, students were transferred over to other more specified administrative units, such as the civil affair section, or the bureau of education. There, interns were given concrete missions, albeit usually simple and documentary ones, so as to develop their practical skills in handling administrative work. After finishing the first two months, most students were sent to a county government to repeat the process they had encountered in the last stage. A few students would be assigned to municipal governments, banks, schools, or courts, according to their professions. As many students expressed in their internship reports, the design of the internship gave them no chance to really understand the details of a given administrative task. They had to spend a lot of time reading and transcribing documents and regulations, which was the only way to gather major sources of their reports at a time when copy machines and typewriters were very rare. Consequently, the majority of internship reports were full of official regulations and descriptions of institutions. Students had no time to discover approach problems, less still to find feasible solutions. In fact, to judge by the comments from professors, one can say that the school did not encourage students to be acute social observers or reformers, or to be critical of the status quo. On the contrary, what the school primarily wanted students to learn from the internship was a pragmatic attitude towards the daily routines within the bureaucracy. Students were to know

what and how to do, rather than what should be done. Of course, if a student demonstrated a thorough understanding of the reality and then went on to propose some reform agendas, professors usually gave out very positive comments. However, the majority of students usually got Bs or Cs on reports, accompanied by comments that criticized their insufficient observation skills and superficial suggestions of reform. For example, Mei Siping ruthlessly reprimanded a student who had been very critical of the status quo during his internship in Zhenjiang (鎮江):

Grade C-(丙-); ... the preface of the student's report claims the goal of the paper is to outline major issues, not to follow the conventional way [of writing down regulations in a report]... But, [the student] failed to point out central issues of all county administrative branches where he stayed... What he studied was simply transcribing regulations and statistics... The proposed reform suggestions were all superficial clichés....¹³⁸

One can imagine that the internship reports influenced by this line of teaching tended to be rather impersonal, unitary, and boring. On occasion, one is compelled to wonder whether it was necessary or helpful to transcribe so many official regulations. However, one thing is sure: students must have worked very hard during the time of their internship. As indicated in reports, in order to gather and write down enough materials, many students found it impossible to take a rest even on the weekends. Those who passed through the internship, though they might not necessarily have been capable officials, were also very unlikely to be unqualified functionaries or misfits within the officialdom. Rigid and drab as this kind of internship might have been, one cannot deny that professors' concerns had their own reasons and values.

The following words are quoted from the internship report of Guo Peishi (郭培師), a student of the municipal administration section who practiced his internship in the municipal

¹³⁸ Song Mingxin, *Zhengjiang zhi zong shi cha ji xian zheng fu ge ju shi xi zong bao gao (The Overall Observation and Internship Report of Zhejiang and Bureaus of the County Government) er shi shi ji san shi nian dai guo qing diao cha bao gao (The Investigation Report of the National Situation during the 1930s hereafter IRNS)* 53 (Nanjing: Phoenix Publishing House, 2012), 295.

government of the national capital Nanjing in 1933. One can see from this quotation how Central Politics School students comprehended and were shaped by the training of public administration.

Guo Peishi claimed in the preface of his report that he was concerned about:

[T]urning abstract and empty municipal administrative science [*Chou xiang kong dong zhi shi zheng ke xue* 抽象空洞之市政科學] into concrete and substantive mathematic formulas [*Ju ti shi zai zhi shu xue kong shi* 具體實在之數學公式], turning vague concepts into precise numbers so as to condense the four year long municipal study into three minute formula instructions, to turn the discursive municipal plans of administrators into sure feasible work, For example, on evaluating the merit of personnel, there is the redundant employee [calculating] formula (see page 61), on whether the traffic of the road is heavy or not, there is the road capacity formula (see page 145), on what size the cemetery should be, there is cemetery calculating formula (page 426), on the distribution and number of vehicles, there is guest/time/mileage calculating formula (page 220)... These formulas are accurate when applied in Nanjing, and also in Shanghai. [They are] accurate in China. So are they abroad. It only took three minutes to know these formulas. And then, an illiterate can be an expert of municipal administration. A kid can take the critical position of municipal administration. These most economic, scientific, advanced formulas have been widely used in natural sciences... Since my approach is mathematic; I calculated and turned everything into numbers...¹³⁹

The quotation contains some very important information. While expressing a univocal high scientism, one can also sense from his wording that Guo Peishi was not satisfied with “the abstract and empty municipal administrative science”, “vague concepts,” and the “discursive plans” that he had learnt from the school. Nevertheless, such dissatisfaction with the public administration curriculum did not offer Guo Peishi any alternative resources when it came to questioning the ultimate legitimacy of natural science in political affairs. At the time, it was almost impossible for the student and greenhorn administrator Guo Peishi to develop his own administrative approach. All he could do was to find the most scientific way of municipal administration - in this case, the mathematic formula-like statistic data that married with the

¹³⁹ Guo Peishi, *Nanjing shi zheng fu gong wu ju shi xi bao gao* (*The Internship Report of the Bureau of Civil Engineering, Nanjing Municipal Government*) IRNS 242, 4-6. Those page numbers in the quotation are added by Guo Peishi himself.

conceptual framework provided by teachers such as Jiang Kangli and Xue Bokang. The second noteworthy thing about Guo's preface is the clear picture it provides as to the all-inclusive nature of early public administration in China (and, in fact, also the US). Even though Guo Peishi was assigned to the bureau of engineering affairs within the Nanjing municipal government (*Nanjing shi zheng fu gong wu ju* 南京市政府工務局), which dealt with issues that were closest to the pure technical affairs imagined by the early public administration scholars, he still felt obliged to discuss personnel administration, traffic regulation, cemetery management, and road maintenance at the same time. In fact, Guo's report covered a wide range - from providing housing service, to the hygiene of food and grocery markets, from the standardized document writing and filing system to the remuneration and motivation of municipal employees. This mosaic of discrete issues, on the one hand, reflected the reality of a Nanjing municipal government that was still in its initial stages of specification, even though it had been the capital of China. As a result, a lot of things that might be handled by different sections in municipal governments in the West were all thrown to the bureau of engineering affairs, where Guo Peishi spent his months as an intern. On the other hand, in his report Guo Peishi imitated his teachers, who deemed it normal for public administrative scholar to discuss a very wide range of things relevant to the process of administration. This phenomenon indicates the vagueness of the category of public administration during the early (and perhaps still in the present) period. Public administration seemed involved in everything for some people but relevant to nothing for the other. This uncertainty of the boundary of the discipline made many public administrative scholars and students to pursue a kind of versatility which in fact defied the logic of professionalization which was vehemently embraced by protagonists of public administration. This contradiction can be seen in Guo Peishi's preface, where he justified his efforts to

comprehend the knowledge of road building by telling a story of engineer mayors in the US.¹⁴⁰ Guo Peishi's statement is not unique among Central Politics School interns whose internship reports are, in a sense, more like the gazetteers of administrative units that cover many details and documents but lack a specific focus.

Last but not least, Guo Peishi's statement unexpectedly reveals the underlying paradoxical logic of modern culture. When he claimed that all people, including children, could understand his formulas within three minutes and thus became municipal experts, he was not just being facetious. Science, by its very nature, assumes that certain universal truths and methods can be comprehended by all people, within sufficient bounds of reason. By such an assumption, age, experience, cultural background, and social status are all factors irrelevant to the formation of good judgment and understanding. The world described by the discourse of modern science, at least in its most vulgarized version, in essence is nothing more than a big machine that can be analyzed into much more simple parts. It is this discourse that made it possible for Guo Peishi and ordinary people to imagine that social and political facts which happen in the world can be analyzed as crystal clear formulas legible for three-year-old children. The paradox of modern scientific discourse lies precisely here. On the one hand, it values professions and professional knowledge generated by rigid scientific methods. On the other hand, all these professions can be legitimate and considered as truly scientific only if their specified knowledge can be examined and represented according to a single general scientific rule that is theoretically understandable for non-professionals. As a result, the so-called professionals become somewhat temporary owners; the first comers to realm that is deprived of any uniqueness illegible to scientific scrutiny. Their professions must be always open to questions from rational laymen who feel

¹⁴⁰ Guo Peishi, *Nanjing shi zheng fu gong wu ju shi xi bao gao*, 7. Interestingly, Guo Peishi borrowed words from Han Confucian text "it is the shame of a sage for not knowing even a thing" which definitely had nothing to do with professionalism to argue the necessity for municipal administrators to know civil engineering.

confident enough to challenge anything that cannot be reduced to three-minute formula instruction. All those subtle understandings, feelings, and indescribable practical experiences in the professional realm can be questioned and derided as unscientific nonsense by people who possess little but a specific kind of reason and logic. Public administrators, such as Guo Peishi and his teachers, used this discourse to deny incumbent officials, clerks, and practitioners a monopoly over an esoteric knowhow of politics, administration or any related profession. In other words, this discourse empowered inexperienced Central Politics School officials to assert the superiority of their “active” and “scientific” administrative approaches, at the expense of original indigenous practices. To illustrate, let us consider how the magistrate of Changshu (常熟) in 1931 was described by a Central Politics School intern. The magistrate Tan Yingui (譚翼珪) took the office in 1930. As the intern readily admitted, it was quite rare that Tan stayed in this big, prosperous but also extremely complicated county for more than two years. In many ways, the 47-year-old Tan was an overqualified county magistrate. Before becoming the magistrate, Tan had received his law degree in Japan and had been a lawyer back in China. He had then been the principal of the Nanjing First Normal School, and served in a few secretary positions within the Jiangsu provincial government. This long career of civil service made Tan an experienced administrator, who was not only familiar with the law but also good at processing official documents and administration. From the narratives of the intern, Tan is construed as a sincere supervisor who was truly willing to share his practical knowledge and experience with the young Central Politics School students. He told them that being familiar with law and official document processing could help the magistrate reduce the boycotts from opponents, who would refuse to follow a policy or administrative task if they found any flaw in the procedure. Tan also confessed to the young interns that he had no interest in pursuing great plans and goals. He cared more

about feasibility. According to this principle, Tan gave top priority to financing the maintenance of dikes and embankments surrounding lowland paddy fields. He also managed the salvation of peasants who suffered from floods by allowing them to work in the building of the dikes and embankments. While acknowledging Tan's achievements, the intern nonetheless manifested a controlled but salient disapproval of his lack of "long term and macro plans (*yuan da zhi ji hua* 遠大之計畫):"

The county administration during the time of political tutelage is not only about maintaining the status quo, but also enacting implementation procedures according to local needs. All things, from the building of roads and waterways with the county, to the establishment of police, the measurement of land, the promotion of people's education, the development of industry, the improvement of peasant life... the fulfillment of rule of constitution and local autonomy, are not only utopian plans. All are in fact indispensable requirements for a magistrate under the rule of Party.¹⁴¹

Tan's shrewd skills of dealing with people were also described with a satirical tone:

Principally, his dealings with people are full of flexibility. The responsibilities he should take are transferred to the county administrative meeting if they are transferable. The people he should offend for the implement of administrative tasks were also offended in the name of the county administrative meeting as long as the situation permitted. Although he was highly dissatisfied with the local party branch, on the surface, he showed great obedience... To the powerful locals, those who he called just and decent gentry [*gong zheng shi shen* 公正士紳], he praised them as he could. For these reasons, he won a good reputation in Changshu society...¹⁴²

Apparently, the valuable practical experience that Tan Yigui tried to share was not appreciated by the intern, whom expected a county administration that methodically developed modern plans rather than subtly handled local politics. For the intern, without long term, macro plans based on proper methods, Tan had merely enacted a series of passive responses to the ugly reality. It is

¹⁴¹ Li Yongbin, Fan Zubang, Yuan Yongfu, *Changshu xian shi di zheng zhi jing ji she hui gai kuang zong bao gao* (*The General Report of the Basic Facts of History and Geography, Politics, Economy, and Society in Changshu*) IRNS 94,172-173.

¹⁴² Li Yongbin, Fan Zubang, Yuan Yongfu, *Changshu xian shi di zheng zhi jing ji she hui gai kuang zong bao gao*, 156.

small wonder, then, that he also criticized the overall administrative efficiency of the county government and blamed the chief of staff for failing to process documents efficiently. Although throughout the internship report the intern did not put forward any concrete and valuable suggestion, the authority of science still made him believe that he could see much more and do much better than the senior magistrate.¹⁴³ In a similar vein, an intern claimed that one of the most serious problems in Songjiang (松江, another economically well developed county right outside Shanghai) was its redundant employees (*rong yuan* 冗員):

Common redundant employees are simply holding their jobs without doing real work. It is a pure waste of public funds that has no practical benefit. It is a pity that useful money is spent on useless tasks and useful staff working on useless positions.¹⁴⁴

From this intern's perspective, the Songjiang county governmental clerks were not incompetent by nature. What made them actually worthless were the official documents that occupied these clerks. The intern, just like his classmate in Changshu, could not find any value from official document processing. Because he evaluated the performance of the county government according to some external "objective" standards, such as efficiency and scientific methods, whether or not he knew the specific facts and skills central to the concrete processes of local governance (as comprehended by those "redundant employees") did not matter so much.

Moreover, this scientific discourse allowed young Central Politics School graduates to claim a right to turn different occupational realms towards their administrative purview, even though most of these college students had no practical experience. For example, after witnessing

¹⁴³ Interestingly, the internship report was severely criticized by a Central Politics School professor, probably Mei Siping, who left a very negative feedback on the paper saying: Changshu was such a big county full of issues worth discussing. However the report only provides superfluous observations. See Li Yongbin, Fan Zubang, Yuan Yongfu, *Changshu xian shi di zheng zhi jing ji she hui gai kuang zong bao gao*, 4.

¹⁴⁴ Gong Xinzhai, *Jiangsu Songjiang xian xian zheng fu gong an jiao yu jian she di fang zi zhi shi xi zong bao gao shu* (*The Main Internship Report of Public Security, Education, Construction, and Local Autonomy in Songjiang County Government, Jiangsu*), IRNS 83, 58.

the highly commercialized and specified economy of Baoshan (寶山 a county adjacent to Shanghai), an intern argued in 1931 that:

[In spite of the high employment and the absence of serious social problems,] people's thoughts and occupations do not meet the conditions of science. In the present world of science, all construction should be based on science... Materially, [the society of Baoshan] is magnificent. However, there is no scientific spirit to buttress this social magnificence. The content of society remains like the past.

As such, the intern suggested that the government should be further involved in people's daily life, including domestic arrangements and the hygiene of individual households. His education allowed him to ignore the "superfluous" economic prosperity and deem it necessary to instill some scientific spirit into a highly stratified and commercialized society.

Against this background, it is not so ridiculous for Guo Peishi to assert that the Nanjing's municipal administration could be improved by formulas comprehensibly by children in three minutes. For Guo Peishi and his Central Politics School classmates, there were definitive universal scientific rules that could be learnt by people without practical experience in politics and administration. The power of these scientific rules exceeded time-honored practices. To further illustrate, here is Guo Peishi's redundant employee formula:

The Redundant Employee Formula (invented by Guo Peishi)

$$[(\text{current employee}) \times (\text{theoretical per capita daily working hour}) - (\text{current employee}) \times (\text{actual per capita daily working hour})] \div (\text{theoretical per capita daily working hour}) = \text{redundant employees}$$

Apparently, this so called "formula" had no scientific or statistic base; it is simply an expression of vulgarized scientific methodology. Be that as it may, this formula can be seen as an accurate indication of the spirit and content of public administration Guo Peishi had received. Because of the universality of science, this formula could be designed completely outside of a concrete social context. The individual employee's working ability could be ignored. It is a pity that we

do not have the comments Guo Peishi's teachers put on the internship report, or know how these professors evaluated the effects of their teachings. But, from the confident wording of the report, it would be very unlikely that Guo Peishi tried to irritate, rather than impress, his teachers in the paper.

Not all students demonstrated the ambition and confidence of Guo during their internships. On the contrary, many of them encountered the first “cultural shocks” of their careers. For instance, when Guo Peishi's classmate Gao Yingdu (高應篤) was assigned to Shanghai municipal government to do his internship, he soon realized three things:

First, what I learnt was not what I should practice. Second, [all tasks were] hard to deal with; Third, I have no ideal of how to write official documents..¹⁴⁵

As a young man who spent most of his life in the peaceful countryside and the campus of Central Politics School, Gao Yingdu had very difficult time adjusting to cosmopolitan Shanghai, which was supposed to be the most typical and ideal environment. Shanghai and its municipal government was probably the closest to the Western paradigm when it came to his public administration training. From his narratives, one can sense that the school's education did not make Gao Yingdu a well prepared municipal official. He spent most of his internship finding his way out the labyrinth of administrative and documentary processes. What really impressed him was not the power of scientific administration, but a conversation with the municipal government chief of staff, Yu Hongjun (俞鴻鈞). On the dialectics of regulation and human nature (*Ren qin* 人情), Yu told the young politics School interns: to fully defend the authority of law, an administrator needs to accommodate human nature into the explanation and implementation of law, even though it may mean some expedient application of the law. However, that is not to say

¹⁴⁵ Gao Yingdu, *nei zheng chun qiu* (*The Spring and Autumn of Domestic Affairs*) (Taipei: Huaxin, 1984), 1.

that regulations should be violated when there are conflicts between the law and human needs. A wise official should also keep in mind that all regulations come from human nature. Following the law is therefore also following human nature.¹⁴⁶ Yu's admonition cannot be understood through consistent formal logic. It is based on what Pierre Bourdieu called practical reason, which is highly contextual, personal, and not universally valid. To put it simply, Yu's words are not so much a social science theory as they are an aphorism of political wisdom that resorts to life experience rather than scientific analysis. From the message Yu Hongjun delivered, we can infer that these young public administration interns must have given the incumbent officials an impression of an over-rationalized and institutionalized administrative approach.

Whatever their performance, Guo Peishi and Gao Yingdu still had the chance to practice public administration in a real municipal environment. For the students who were assigned to areas outside of the handful of modern cities, they encountered a world that had little, if anything, to do with public administration. Chen Kaisi (陳開泗), a first class student of the general administration section who started his internship in August 1931, for example, found the entire design of his internship was rooted in unrealistic wishful thinking. Chen Kaisi essentially learnt nothing from his four months stay in Wujiang (吳江), a rich county adjacent to Lake Tai (太湖). The county authorities had neither the ideas nor the resources to modernize their administration. There were no specified administrative sections in the county government, nor were these sections and functions necessary for Wujiang's rural communities. So long as the county government maintained societal order, processed litigations, and collected taxes, it had fulfilled its responsibilities. Unfortunately for both the county and Chen Kaisi, none of these traditional governmental tasks could be entrusted to young Central Politics School interns, who might know

¹⁴⁶ Gao Yingdu, *nei zheng chun qiu*, 3.

something about the rationalization of municipal administration, but definitely knew nothing about presiding over trials for land disputes or gathering taxes, not to mention catching thieves and bandits in the countryside. As a result, Chen Kaisi and the other two interns had nothing to do but transcribe official regulations and files. After the magistrate gave them an official compilation of laws and regulations so as to prevent them from reading the official files, the only thing these interns could do was sit in the office and read their own books.¹⁴⁷ Chen Kaisi's story shows us just how far public administration was away from the reality of Chinese local governance.

Section Two: The Jiangning Experiment and the Orthodox Public Administrative Approach

The absence of solid approaches to real governance, and especially in regards to rural areas, in both the Central Politics School's curriculum and the political agenda of the Nationalist Party was soon exposed by the poor promotion of autonomy and ineffective local governance in the Nationalist controlled areas. The period from 1929 to 1932 was beset by large-scale wars between the central government, its internal enemies, and the fierce military invasion launched by the militaristic Japan. Only after 1932 could the Nationalist government, which eventually defeated its internal competitors and temporarily mitigated the expansionist impulses of Japan, pay attention and devote resources to its fragile local governance and administration. At the second national domestic affairs meeting held in 1932, a resolution was passed that recognized the necessity of working out more modern and feasible modes of county government. There were already three experimental counties in existence, which had been sponsored by semi-independent Hebei and Shandong military leaders in their jurisdictions. In the greater sense, they had

¹⁴⁷ Chen Kaisi, *hui shou ba si nian* (*The Retrospect of Last Eighty Years*), 45-46.

supported these endeavors in order to challenge and embarrass the legitimacy of the Nationalist central government in North China. These three were officially acknowledged by the central government, and two more new experimental counties were consequently established by the Nationalist government in Jiangsu and Zhejiang, the core area of the regime. These two experimental counties were set up in Jiangning (江寧), Jiangsu and Lanxi (蘭溪), Zhejiang, in the February and September of 1933. The huge responsibility of figuring out the Nationalist style modern county administration was, unsurprisingly, assigned to the Central Politics School. The two experimental counties were to be directly led and run by teachers and students of the school. However, the school at the time was poorly prepared for county administration in rural areas. As a result, the twenty nine year old Xiao Zheng (蕭錚), who had studied land policy at University of Berlin, was entrusted with the mission to erect a Land Administration College (*Di zheng xue yuan* 地政學院) in the Central Politics School in 1933, while a land administration section was added to the department of administration. The municipal oriented Central Politics School at last had an institute and program that, at least in theory, was designed to cultivate professional personnel who would know how to handle the inveterate farmland problems in this agricultural county.

And yet, the establishment of the experimental counties and the new college did not automatically bring about an improvement in local administration. Derived from the allegedly unquestionable authority of science though they might be, theories and principles of public administration still needed to be applied through the real process of administration. In terms of finding ways to prove the value and legitimacy of public administration, through the course of its four-year existence the Jiangning Experimental County of Autonomy (hereafter Jiangning

Experimental County), took the major responsibility of fulfilling public administration principles and practices. The difficulties faced in this experimental county will be the focus of this section.

Jiangning is a big county that encircles the capital Nanjing to the west and south. In 1933, it had an 1888 km² area and 562,064 residents.¹⁴⁸ Before the borderline dividing Nanjing and Jiangning was formally drawn in 1934, the northern part of Jiangning was actually a direct suburb of Nanjing (the Jiangning county government was actually located inside Nanjing) while its southern part was much more rural.

From the very beginning, this special geographical location gave Jiangning special status. Jiangning was not only an experimental county; it was also the gate to the Nationalist capital and thus a showcase of the entire Nationalist rule. For this reason, the Nationalist regime faced pressure to make Jiangning successful. Because of this consideration, the Jiangning Experimental County was de facto directly supervised by a county committee formed by core members of the Nationalist regime, rather than the Jiangsu provincial government. In addition, the experimental county did not need to deliver a significant part of its tax income to the provincial and central government, but could maintain and use all financial resources it collected in the jurisdiction. Moreover, it also received subsidies from the provincial and central government. Finally, to guarantee the thorough implementation of policies, the entire Jiangning Experimental County was staffed with graduates and interns from the Central Politics School. These students would work under the command of the school's dean of the department of administration and, simultaneously, the county magistrate Mei Siping. All these measures bestowed the Jiangning experimental county with an abundance of resources that was almost unprecedented in Chinese history. Correspondently, it was anticipated that the experimental

¹⁴⁸ Xiao Zhicheng, *Jiangning xian zheng shi yan gai kuang ji gong wen cai zheng jing zheng shi xi bao gao* (*The Internship Report of the Overall Situation of Jiangning County Administrative Experiment and Official Documents, Finance, and Police*) IRNS 65, 30, 39.

county test out various kind of institutions, policies, social reforms, and state-building agendas. Some of these endeavors were well beyond the realm of public administration. For our purpose and limited space, only those major measures directly connected to public administrative ideals and practices will be examined.

The reform of the Trimming Bureau into Section (*Cai ju gai ke* 裁局改科) is a good place to start. From the very beginning, the experimental county was organized according to a new administrative framework that very different from the one used by the ordinary counties. According to the original county organizational law (*Xian zu zhi fa* 縣組織法), which was first promulgated in 1929 when the passion of building an extremely powerful and advanced government was at its historical high, all county governments in China in principle were prescribed to establish at least four bureaus (*ju* 局). The four bureaus were Police, Finance, Construction, and Education) so as to provide all modern governmental services. To guarantee that the wills of provincial authorities would be faithfully enforced by county governments, all heads of bureaus were directly appointed and audited by relevant supervising halls (*ting* 廳) in provincial governments, according to the spirit of the direct line system.¹⁴⁹ To illustrate, the head of county bureau of finance would be decided by the provincial hall of finance, rather than the county magistrate. This institutional design represented the radical dream of uncompromised rationalization and centralization in all governmental tasks. In theory, the county governments would become nothing more but the dutiful implementers of the upper level authorities, or the so-called “the joint office of provincial halls”(Sheng ting lian he ban gong shi 省廳聯合辦公室), and thus the efficiency of the entire state machine would be greatly improved.¹⁵⁰ Unfortunately

¹⁴⁹ Li Guowei, “Zhong yang suo she zhi de liang ge shi yan xian-Jiangning yu Lanxi” (The Two Experimental Counties Set by the Central Government-Jiangning and Lanxi), *Zheng zhi yue kan (Politics Monthly)* 2 (5), 123.

¹⁵⁰ Zhu Jun, “Xian zheng gai ge zhi li lun yu shi ji” (The Theory and Reality of County Administrative Reform),

for the Nationalist government, this dream of building highly responsive local governments was rarely fulfilled. In most cases, because all bureau heads only followed and respected orders from the provincial halls, which often had very poor horizontal connections among themselves, the authority of the county magistrates tended to be ignored while different bureaus in a county could, at the same time, carry out contradictory policies. The overall administrative capability and efficiency of county governments was actually hurt by this highly rationalized state building strategy, not to mention the fact that establishing so many bureaus and hiring their staffs was very expensive for most counties that could barely afford their original small staffs. As such, Chiang Kai-shek promoted instead another county administrative system, which he developed in Jiangxi province when the anti-Communist campaign had forced the war-torn counties to adopt a less bureaucratized, but more executively powerful, administrative framework. To put it simply, these county governments rescinded bureaus, set sections that had a smaller staff, and had no supervisors other than the county magistrate. This was the basic principle of the Trimming Bureau into Section policy, which aimed to enhance the authority of the county magistrate and his abilities to commend and concentrate the resources of the downsized, but organizationally coordinated, county government. This policy turned out to be more realistic for the average county, which had neither the fiscal nor personnel resources to support a professionalized county bureaucracy.¹⁵¹ Chiang Kai-shek started to promote his warzone county administrative institution to the other provinces slightly before the establishment of the Jiangning experimental county government. Thus, the experimental county was also reorganized according to the Trimming Bureau into Section policy. This new county institution could be seen as the first experiment, and

Zheng zhi yue kan 2 (5), 7.

¹⁵¹ Cheng Maoxing ed, *Jiao fei di fang xing zheng zhi du (The Local Administrative Institution in the Anti-bandit Campaign Area)*, *Min guo shi liao cong kan (The Collection of Republican Historical Materials)* 77 (Zhengzhou: Elephant Press, 2009), 79-84.

was a great chance for the Central Politics School officials to examine their theories of public administration, which tended to assume that the expansion and professionalization of bureaucracy was the prerequisite of modern administration.

From the perspective of hindsight, the Jiangning authorities did not take this chance to study the potential of the new policy seriously. Whilst it is true that there were only sections under the county government, these sections, in terms of funding and personnel, were even larger than the bureaus in all the other counties. Jiangning had six sections: civil administration (*Min zheng* 民政), finance, police, education, construction, and land. All of them were sufficiently staffed by Central Politics School graduates, who were even sent out to sub-section units (*gu* 股) in order to pursue highly specified administrative work. For example, the section of education alone had 12 paid formal civil servants; the section of construction had added a sub-section of industry to promote and manage its industrial development in Jiangning.¹⁵² This unit was, in fact, intended to take on an emerging, if not wholly inexistent, administrative task. It was suitable for the ambitious logic of public administration, which preferred to handle specific missions with specific bureaucratic apparatuses. However, it undoubtedly violated the spirit of the Trimming Bureau into Section policy, which sought to build a smaller and more generalist county administration. The Jiangning authorities' distortion of the policy was not unexpected. Roughly

¹⁵² Xiao Zhicheng, *Jiangning xian zheng shi yan gai kuang ji gong wen cai zheng jing zheng shi xi bao gao*, 93-95. There were more than one hundred employees in the Jiangning Experimental County Government. More than three fifth of them came from the Central Politics School or had received higher education. Although the positions taken by these college graduates or students were not high, their salaries had been significantly increased so as to experiment how to maintain a high quality and professional civil service. In consequence, the annual administrative expenditure alone was 869,974.97 yuan, which was almost 70,000 yuan more than the annual land tax, Jiangning's major income. Meanwhile, the annual budget of many counties in China had even much less than 70,000 yuan. See Wang Ke. "Shi xi Nanjing guo min zheng fu jian li chu qi de yi ci xian ji zheng fu gai ge" (An Analysis of a County Governmental Reform during the Early Period Nanjing Nationalist Government), *Cai zhi* (*Intelligence*) 35 (2010), 293-294. Li Weizhong, *er shi shi ji san shi nian dai xian zheng jian she shi yan yan jiu* (*The Research of County Administrative Construction Experiment during 1930s*) (Beijing: People's Press, 2009), 237

at the same time he took the office of the county magistrate, Mei Siping had expressed his objection to the Trimming Bureau into Section policy. He was concerned that the county magistrate alone would not be able to review and approve all official documents if there were no more bureau heads whom could take on a significant part of workload. Mei Siping argued that the problem was not the county organizational law per se, but the fact that it was poorly understood and widely disrespected. In other words, in his opinion, so long as the spirit of law could be properly understood and followed, the idea of rapid bureaucratic expansion in county administration as required by the county organizational law was unproblematic.¹⁵³ Mei's perspective, on the surface, was practical in that it did not overestimate the effect of institutional reforms, but took into account human factors in the building and running of institutions. However, this "practicality" was based on typical public administration neglect, whereby confusion reigns as to why good institutions could not be properly known and respected. After all, public administration was a discipline where the value-free technical application of best administrative methods had presumed a model of the "rational man," where everyone must be methodologically objective in practice and pursue nothing but a unanimous standard of efficiency. Behind his pragmatic attitude, Mei's real intention was to defend an institutionalized/professionalized administrative expansion of county government, rather than the simplified county framework. Under the circumstances, although the Jiangning Experimental County under Mei's command from the very beginning was reorganized according to Chiang Kai-shek's "austerity policy," the county administration actually grew. Because his county was not a subordinate unit under the provincial government, there were no provincial halls to direct Jiangning's bureau-like sections. Neither were there quarrels between the county magistrate and

¹⁵³ Mei Siping, "Di fang xing zheng zhi du gai ge wen ti" (On the Reform of Local Administrative Institution), *Zheng zhi ji kan (Politics Quarterly)* 1 (1) (1933), 10-12.

the heads of the major administrative branches, because all heads were students of the magistrate. In this way, Jiangning was still on the tracks of developing public administration, even though it bore the dents of China's stricken reality.

The nature of public administration in Jiangning could also be found in its inclusive administrative tasks and corresponding financial support and expenditure. The experimental county was allowed to keep all its taxes, and it received a ten thousand yuan monthly subsidy from the central government. Thus, the annual budget of the county could reach up to 929,257.62 yuan. In other words, after deducting 869,974.97 yuan in administrative fees, the county still had nearly a 60,000 yuan surplus, roughly equal to the annual budget of a small poor county, to pursue further administrative innovations and local reconstruction.¹⁵⁴ Due to this unparalleled fiscal support, Jiangning was essentially the promised land for all aspects of reform. In Jiangning, unlike other counties, public administration theories and methods were not confined within the county government. The idea of applying scientific knowledge and rational administrative measures to all public realms had never been so close to fulfillment. Apart for rationalizing the internal management of personnel and document processing, the Central Politics School officials who were brought in cooperated with various professionals, such as physicians, sociologists, agriculturalists, civil engineers, and economists, to initiate reforms or new tasks. These ranged from public hygiene and new crop promotion to compulsory primary education and the cooperative movement. It would not be untoward to say that Woodrow Wilson might well have envied the influence and scale of public administration in Jiangning, had he witnessed the endeavors of the Central Politics School officials.

Despite the wide variety of flamboyant innovations across the realms of modernization, the county government itself did not make institute progress. It remained an administrative unit,

¹⁵⁴ Wang Ke. "Shi xi Nanjing guo min zheng fu jian li chu qi de yi ci xian ji zheng fu gai ge," 295.

staffed with officials whose “training” seemed to have a lot to do with the administration of modern tasks, but did not guarantee that they would be better executors of highly specialized programs like seed improvement or water facility maintenance. Without the close assistance of other modern professional institutes like the National Central University, or the private Jinling University that provided the most agriculturalists, it would have been unlikely that the Central Politics School officials to do these jobs themselves. Granted, if we simply ignore the fundamental question as to whether these comprehensive modernizing projects that consumed so much financial and human resources were really necessary for a Nationalist regime which had not yet consolidated its political/military control over the majority of China, then we are compelled to ask whether these fancy programs were best promoted by the public administration approach, a costly modernizing endeavor. Admittedly, the effects of public administration are never easy to evaluate, for many governmental tasks simply cannot be measured. For instance, should one judge the effect of a police station simply by counting how many criminals it had arrested? The definition of effect is itself a controversial question. Is a government that works faster but at greater cost better than the one that works slower but cheaper?

Since there is no blanket way to appraise the value of public administration, a case-by-case assessment remains the most reliable. There is no doubt that officials working in the experimental county were more capable when it came to dealing with administrative works. In general, they were more willing to serve the people, and to work overtime without rewards. These ardent characteristics, on the one hand, might have stemmed from the revolutionary enthusiasm that had not faded yet come the 1930s. On the other, the discourse and training of public administration probably exerted some influence, because the new expertise did aim to inculcate its disciples with some professional ethics. According to various sources, one senses a

very high morale among Central Politics officials and interns in Jiangning. In addition, this also must owe to the more rational and transparent working processes, as well as the fairer treatment of governmental personnel. Open and institutionalized administrative procedures did reduce the possibility of corruption. A higher, standard salary was also indispensable when it came to sustaining the human quality of administration.

Seen from this prospective, the Jiangning Experimental government was eminently capable of delivering piecemeal institutional and administrative improvements. Among other things, the establishment of an institutionalized personnel appointment, evaluation system, and scientific filing of official documents were the real legacy that this first generation of Chinese public administrators left. In other words, public administration was most effective within the range of the office.

Outside the office, however, the difficulty of recognizing the value of public administration increased significantly. The fundamental problem remained as to whether or not every task needed a corresponding administration. If so, what does that administration stand for? For example, hygiene in the 1930 China was an emerging concern, and a realm that crosses over the boundaries of medicine, civil engineering, social welfare, and administration. The Central Politics School officials essentially saw this realm through the conceptual framework of hygienic administration (*Wei sheng xing zheng* 衛生行政). The term “hygienic administration” seemed to imply that hygienic affairs needed a special kind of administration. However, how and why it differed from the so-called “general administration” was not always clear. The following quotation comes from an observer of Jiangning’s hygienic administration:

The hygiene professionals in our country are extremely inadequate. Nowadays, people who cope with hygienic endeavors are not usually qualified. Most of them are physicians. There are also several non-physician personnel. The rarity of proper hygienic administrators to preside over

hygiene in just a county or a city is already deeply felt, not to mention the hygienic personnel for the entire nation. Thus, the training of personnel for hygienic administration, hygienic education, hygienic engineering... is really the most important work for pursuing hygiene today.¹⁵⁵

The vagueness of hygienic administration is sufficiently demonstrated in this quotation. For the observer, the real professional hygienic administrators should be neither pure physicians, nor ordinary people without a medical background. One can infer, therefore, that a real hygienic administrator was supposed to be someone who had some necessary hygienic knowledge to promote its development. However, according to the standard of this observer, the Central Politics School public administrators were not qualified hygienic personnel. Thus, the only reasonable conclusion is that the hygienic knowledge possessed by the Central Politics School public administrators was not professional enough to deal with hygienic issues. As a matter of fact, the hygienic administration was indeed run first by Central Politics School officials who were responsible for educational administration (another vague realm), and then later by the school's graduates in the section of civil administration in the Jiangning Experimental County government.¹⁵⁶ Judging from the affairs and services they provided, the so-called hygienic administration in Jiangning was basically the general administration in hygienic units. Central Politics School administrators could only use general administrative principles and practices to manage hygienic affairs, because those were the principles that they knew. In this situation, medical care and the administration of a hygienic unit were entangled with one another. The

¹⁵⁵ Dai Zhiyi, "Jiangning zi zhi shi yan xian wei sheng xing zheng xian kuang zhi guan cha ji jin hou gai jin zhi wo jian" (An Observation of the Current Situation of Hygienic Administration in Jiangning Autonomy Experimental County and My Opinion of the Improvement in the Future), *Yi shi gong lun (The Public Opinion of Medical Issues)* 2 (13) (1935), 20.

¹⁵⁶ Dai Zhiyi, "Jiangning zi zhi shi yan xian wei sheng xing zheng xian kuang zhi guan cha ji jin hou gai jin zhi wo jian," *Yi shi gong lun* 2 (12) (1935), 16. The fact that hygienic administration in Jiangning was more close to a branch of general county administration can also be found the institution of hygienic instructor (*wei sheng zhi dao yuan* 衛生指導員). Hygienic instructors were the most grass-root hygienic personnel living in villages who were expected by Central Politics School officials to perform a wide range of mission from vaccine injection, emergency treatment, hygienic knowledge propaganda, to household registration. The extreme difficulty of finding such versatile candidates in rural areas is imaginable.

county's hygienic institute (*wei sheng yuan* 衛生院), for example, was both the highest authority of Jiangning's hygienic administration and the county hospital. Such a combination was criticized by the observer as a hindrance to both the independence of medical practice and the efficiency of hygienic administration.¹⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the experimental county government still followed this line of thinking, building a hygienic administrative pyramid where the distinction of labor between medical and administrative professionals was unclear. Here, one comes face to face with a paradox of public administration: the pursuit of professionalization leads to the self-contradiction and denial of this profession. This paradox becomes especially obvious when public administration is involved in an even more professionalized realm. To take Jiangning's hygienic administration as an example, these administrators could not accept that hygienic administration was only the name of certain supportive and logistic activities generated in the process of medical practices. In addition, limited as they were by funds and knowledge, they found it entirely impossible to exclude physicians and nurses from taking on administrative roles. This was especially the case at village-level hygienic substations. As a result, the hygienic administration in Jiangning became a semi-professionalized hierarchy. At the top level, the county hygienic institute (this was virtually a hospital mainly staffed with physicians and nurses) was unlikely to have the time, resources or information to plan for the overall development of the county's hygiene. Therefore, the medical laymen who graduated from the Central Politics School inevitably usurped the county's hygienic policy, making and enacting plans according to their ideal blueprint of modern administration. At the middle levels, physicians and nurses in hygienic stations and substations were part-time administrators who were supposed to manage and supervise all hygienic affairs in schools and communities. Finally, at the bottom, a "hygienic

¹⁵⁷ Dai Zhiyi, "Jiangning zi zhi shi yan xian wei sheng xing zheng xian kuang zhi guan cha ji jin hou gai jin zhi wo jian," *Yi shi gong lun* 2 (12), 18.

instructor” was a de facto title imposed on schoolteachers or villagers who were responsible for turning the term “hygienic administration” into a reality.¹⁵⁸ The whole system, though very rationally organized, was essentially an administrative echelon of small and understaffed clinics that had few, if any, advantages over independent but well-funded medical units. As such, some medical experts suggested the abolishment of hygienic instructors, so as to make hygienic stations and substations better financed and staffed. This suggestion was not adopted, partly because the hygienic instructors, though of little value as medical practitioners, were the only grass root administrators who demonstrated the existence of hygienic, and therefore, public administration. In this regard, one can say that the hygienic administration in Jiangning satisfied the dignity of public administration at the cost of real medical quality and efficiency.

Another case of the vagueness of public administration can be found in the county’s educational administration (*jiao yu xing zheng* 教育行政). Similar to hygienic administration, educational administration was not about education per se, but the management of educational activities. However, as opposed to hygiene, the Central Politics School did have a department of education that was, in theory, set up for training educational administrators. The graduates of this department were not teachers, but were supposed to become primary and high school principals, deans of student bodies, and other heads of school administrative units.¹⁵⁹ For this reason, after

¹⁵⁸ Dai Zhiyi, “Jiangning zi zhi shi yan xian wei sheng xing zheng xian kuang zhi guan cha ji jin hou gai jin zhi wo jian,” *Yi shi gong lun* 2(12), 18.

¹⁵⁹ According to the 1932 curriculum, there were two sections in the department of education: the educational administration and rural education section (*xiang cun jiao yu zu* 鄉村教育組). The educational administration section put an equal emphasis on both educational theory and administration. Besides those courses regarding school administration, students were required to take a lot of social science and philosophical classes, such as educational/child/social psychology educational philosophy and ethics. The rural education section was designed to promote primary and adult education in the countryside. As a result, the designer of curriculum put many agronomical and rural administration courses into the program. Among these courses, the general theory of measurement (*ce liang gai lun* 測量概論) and inorganic chemistry best represents the effort of the curriculum designer to equip the section’s students with some practical knowledge in the rural context. See Cui Mingzhong, *guo min dang zhong yang zheng zhi xue xiao zhi yan jiu*, 254-255.

the Jiangning Experimental County was established, its section of education and the task of educational administration was soon given over to graduates of the school's department of education.

From the very beginning, the Jiangning authorities, propped by the Nationalist regime's enthusiasm for high modernism, set about erecting a sound system of compulsory primary education as its definite priority. Soon, the county government established seven central schools in major towns and villages in the county. These were intended as model units, which would be responsible for promoting and standardizing a unitary primary curriculum in other elementary schools and private tutoring houses. Taking charge of this ambitious program, the section of education took on more than 33 tasks, which involved all aspects of educational activities from curriculum design to the maintenance of the school buildings and its equipment. However, none concerned real teaching in classrooms. According to the description of a graduate of the school's department of education who had worked in Jiangning:

A good educational inspector/instructor [*jiao yu shi dao yuan* 教育視導員], in theory, should have a deep understanding of various educational disciplines, such as educational principles, educational administration, educational psychology, child psychology, teaching methodology, and the trends of modern education, in addition to having some administrative and teaching experience and an impartial and sincere attitude.¹⁶⁰

The graduate's narrative sufficiently indicates the very academically-oriented curriculum of the department. The department of education in the Central Politics School had long been famous for its professors and students' strong interest in philosophical studies. Even though they might not be able to study all those academic realms in the school, they had been taught to value and pursue these professions. It may not be untoward to say that these educational administrators tended to self-identify as educational philosophers more so than pure bureaucrats.

¹⁶⁰ Zhang Zhizhi, "Jiao yu xing zheng jing yan tan" (My Experience of Educational Administration), *Fuwu* 1 (1939), 13.

However, more often than not, these educational administrators had no real teaching experience. As the graduate Zhang Zhizhi (張志智) admitted, when taking the responsibility of educational inspector/instructor, he had not even been a teacher for a single day.¹⁶¹ This position reflected the logic of public administration, whereby the most scientific and efficient way of administration is to turn every task into standardized and checkable procedures. The job of educational inspector/instructors, as the title implies, was to inspect all schools in Jiangning and then give them instruction. They were expected to observe the status of the county's education and discern out all potential flaws, from the environment of a school to the detailed lecturing performance (and even facial expression) of a teacher in accordance with a long checklist.¹⁶² Was this design and practice of public administration really enforceable? As Zhang Zhizhi recalled, it took him more than a month to design an evaluating chart according to the theories he had learnt. But, when he actually visited village schools, he immediately realized:

All I had done in the last one month was to simply draw up plans behind closed doors, and the facts that I witnessed and the objectives that I originally assumed were entirely different. Most elementary schools were renovations of private tutoring houses. Naturally, these schools' buildings violated regulations and their facilities were simple and crude. In some of the more remote rural elementary schools, Four Books and Five Classics (*si shu wu jing* 四書五經) were still taught. Ordinary teachers could not describe any trends of modern elementary education. Nor did they know terms such as the two group combined or single instruction (*Er bu fu dan shi jiao xue fa* 二部複單式教學法). They seemed to feel no difficulty in teaching. I could do nothing to change it because I was afflicted by my own lack of teaching skill. As a result, through the two month long practical inspection and instruction, I could do nothing more than check the locations of schools, urge schools to purchase necessary teaching equipment, assist them to increase funds, ban the stealthy inculcation of Four Books and Five Classics - all most basic and passive works of inspection.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ Zhang Zhizhi, "Jiao yu xing zheng jing yan tan," 13.

¹⁶² Mai Qilin, "Xiang cun jiao yu shi dao de gai zao-Jiangning zi zhi shi yan xian jiao yu shi dao zhi du" (The Reform of Rural Educational Inspection-the Educational Inspection in Jiangning Autonomy Experimental County), *Zheng heng (The Measure of Politics)* 2(6) (1935), 34-35.

¹⁶³ Zhang Zhizhi, "Jiao yu xing zheng jing yan tan," 14. The "two group combined or single instruction" mentioned

According to Zhang Zhizhi's recollections, what this college educated and modern administrator achieved was not so very different from the traditional local school inspectors (*Du xue* 督學). In terms of promoting and improving compulsory education in rural areas, the knowledge of bureaucratic rationalization and social science oriented pedagogy turned out to be irrelevant. At the same time, it was very expensive to establish such a public administrative institution. The salary paid to an educational inspector/instructor could amount to 80 yuan a month, not to mention the money spent in order to train a "professional" educational administrator in a university. Under the circumstances, we are compelled to ask whether investing such a huge amount of money to pursue an allegedly rational, but actually not very effective, administration was as rational and necessary as the protagonists of public administration imagined.

The highly "rational" absurdity of public administration as exposed by the hygienic and educational administrations was far from the worst offenders. To demonstrate the scientific nature of the county's administration, some application of technology was inevitable. The experimental county built a county-wide network of modern concrete roads at high speed. Ironically, to protect these roads, animal-drawn carts, which were major vehicles of transportation in Jiangning, were banned from using these modern facilities. Even the county magistrate Mei Siping admitted to the waste and ineffectiveness of this kind of showpiece construction. He confessed as much in a speech for the second anniversary of the experimental county:

Frankly speaking, the building of those roads in Jiangning is really a miscalculation... A bridge costs thousands while paving roads can consume

by Zhang Zhizhi as the evidence of ordinary rural teachers' ignorance is in fact a very professional term in modern pedagogy. It is basically about how to teach two groups of students whose educational levels and learning abilities were very different in the same class. This Central Politics School graduate apparently believed that this highly specified term is a kind of common sense for all teachers. He did not even think about the possibility that those rural teachers had long accustomed to a teaching environment in which the educational level, age, and learning ability were always varied significantly from one student to another.

even tens of thousands. This money can do a lot of things when used in agricultural improvement... I suggest that all counties, except those of special situation, should rename their sections of construction as sections of agriculture or industry, meanwhile, hiring more agricultural technicians and fewer civil engineers.¹⁶⁴

Mei's confession reminds us that a municipally-oriented public administration that emphasized the role of civil engineering was by no means a neutral administrative approach. Because of its urban origin, public administrations tended to give an unrealistically high priority to building modern forms of infrastructure, and precluded limited resources being used on programs that were most needed by agricultural areas. The profound preference that governed the realms of civil engineering is a proper indication of how technical rationality and science acted upon public administration and its concomitant conceptual framework of knowing and doing.

Despite Mei's denial of a municipal approach and his reemphasis on agricultural programs, the inertia of technical rationality in public administration turned out very ingrained. The most ridiculous move made by the county authorities to prove the value of public administration happened precisely in the realm of agricultural improvement. Under the command of those modern-minded public administrators, the county government should have deployed six pumps to irrigate 50,000 *mu* (33.35 km²) hill farms day and night during a drought in 1934. In addition, they also planned to provide electric irrigation for another 100,000 *mu* (66.7km²) farms on hills

¹⁶⁵ Such a show of science reflected a high interventionism on the part of the public administrators, who were so eager to expand and consolidate the influence of their discipline that

¹⁶⁴ Mei Siping, "Liang nian lai de Jiangning shi yan xian" (Jiangning Experimental County in the Last Two Years), *Zhong yang zhou kan* (*The Central Weekly*) 50 (1935), 8.

¹⁶⁵ "Jiangning zi zhi shi yan xian di zheng gong zuo gai kuang" (The General Situation of Land Administration in Jiangning Autonomy Experimental County), *Di zheng yue kan* (*The Land Administration Monthly*) 3(3) (1935), 406. One can image how expensive it would be to irrigate these hill farms. Such a "modern" but unrealistic endeavor would be enforced again during the Great Leap Forward Movement in the late 1950s by the Chinese Communist government.

they saw the most visible forms of “advancement,” rather than inconspicuous sustainability, as the most direct way to win public and political support.

The aforementioned awkward applications of public administration represent only some unrealistic facets of the discipline. One might argue that public administration, which can be problematic in many realms, has an undeniable value in optimizing the efficiency of administrative processes inside and between governmental units.

The administrative efficiency in the Jiangning Experimental County was indeed much better than other counties for a number of reasons. First of all, because the magistrate of Jiangning was the teacher of his staff, he could order his highly disciplined and well educated student employees to enforce all policies. There might have been no other social group in the entire world that came closer to Weber’s ideal type of bureaucrats, totally rational and law-obedient, than the Central Politics School student officials. The bureaucrats’ only “flaw” was that they followed their supervisor’s orders, not only due to the authority of law, but also because of the charisma of the leader. As admitted by Weber himself, the obedience generated from charisma could sometimes be more thorough than that caused by the law. As such, the magistrate of Jiangning probably had some of the most loyal and docile subordinates in the world. Secondly, the drag force ubiquitous to administration was minimized by the full support of the Nationalist regime and its adequate fiscal and human resources. Under the circumstances, it would be hard for the Jiangning Experimental County to be inefficient. Last but not least, some administrative reforms launched by the county government itself did manage to enhance efficiency. Because the last factor is the only one that has something to do with public administration, it is the one that will be examined in detail,

For starters, in this experimental county the Trimming Bureau into Section policy proved to be feasible. Although this policy was not actually put in place by the Politics School's public administrators (who actually disagreed with the policy's de-bureaucratization spirit), it did benefit Jiangning's administrative efficiency. Even its major opponent, Mei Siping, had to acknowledge that once independent bureaus were replaced by subordinate sections, the county magistrate was better able to coordinate all administrative resources to pursue his tasks. For instance, the Jiangning experimental county established more than one hundred township-village elementary schools, while the whole of Jiangsu province had only 67 similar units. According to Mei's explanation, bureaus of education in other counties had no authority over townships and villages, and the independent affair of establishing schools had nothing to do with the county magistrates who had the power to order sub-county administrative units. In contrast, the section of education, as the subordinate unit of magistrate, could count on his supervisor enforce the task. In a similar vein, the banning of disqualified private tutoring houses in Jiangning was effective because there was better coordination between the section of education and the police under the united command of the magistrate.¹⁶⁶ From this perspective, the Trimming Bureau into Section policy was a successful example of administrative reform, even though it was carried out by public administrators who had no intention to enforcing it at the beginning.

The real direct outcome of public administration was the reform of document writing, processing, and filing. With the expansion of the modern state and the increase of governmental affairs, the quantity of official documents grew exponentially. Accordingly, dealing with a huge amount of papers became an important problem. Before personal computers were widely used in governmental units, the management of official documents could only count on human beings. In

¹⁶⁶ In this way, though never openly admitting, Mei Siping actually proved his perspective published two years ago was wrong. Mei Siping, "Liang nian lai de Jiangning shi yan xian," 5.

these circumstances, the technique of processing and filing documents was a worthy topic indeed for any administrator who wanted to improve administrative efficiency.

For the Jiangning experimental government, its ambitious modernizing programs and disavowal of inert traditional administration made the improvement of administrative efficiency ever more important to its discourse of legitimacy. This political need was also shared by the early twentieth century proponents of public administration, whose major strategy of legitimizing the profession was rooted precisely in the introduction of scientific methods into the administrative process – and especially document processing.. Against this backdrop, it is no coincidence that the Central Politics School public administrators construed the reform of document processing and filing as a major breakthrough point within the experiment of modern county administration.

On the surface, this reform was successful. The administrative efficiency seemed to have been improved significantly. For example, the average time between receiving and replying an official document was significantly shortened from a couple of months to three days, at least in the most ideal scenario.¹⁶⁷ The document format was standardized and a scientific way of keeping and referring to old files became standard practice. It became much easier for officials to find a file and check the process. Simultaneously, personal responsibility and working performance was checkable for the first time, due to the establishment of strict regulations for document delivering and processing. If in the past document processing had been like a long journey with no clear timeline or destination, the new institution made document travel in Jiangning far more like the running of train that kept to a rigid schedule. Given the progress made in time saving and controllability, the positive testimony of a Central Politics School intern

¹⁶⁷ Xiang Nanping, *jiangning zi zhi shi yan xian gai kuang ji gong wen guan li cai zheng jing zheng shi xi bao gao* (*The Internship Report of the General Situation of Jiangning Autonomy Experimental County, Official Document Management, Finance, and Police*) IRNS 66, 76.

seems not to be an exaggeration. In his opinion, the reform of document processing in Jiangning had successfully excluded human factors, achieved the initial goals of “rationalization”, “institutionalization” and ultimate “modernization”.¹⁶⁸

Undoubtedly, the improvement of efficiency of official document processing was a great achievement of public administration. It gave the government the critical ability to gather and handle much more information through its bureaucracy, which is an essential part of any effective governance. However, such an achievement did not come without a price. If we recall the intern working in Songjiang who despised the value of official document processing, we cannot help but sense some degree of irony that the administrative reforms, put into place by former Central Politics School interns who hoped to replace trivial document issues with “long term and macro plans,” led to the official document’s central role being enhanced. Moreover, such an approach to reform bore elements of inefficiency. In order to establish an administrative process that was similar to an industrial assembly line, every official document, regardless of its content and complexity, was seen as essentially identical to all comparable administrative products. Consequently, functionaries who dealt with documents were considered to be interchangeable cogs within the state machine, and thus suitable for any position. The difference in working capability and political judgment among the workers of the administrative assembly lines were, therefore, a factor that should be inhibited so as to maintain quality control. In this system, the efficiency of processing official documents was no doubt increased. In some ways, the distribution of workload was also fairer. However, the extent to which an administrative task was actually completed well, rather than just merely processed on paper in a short time, remains unclear.

¹⁶⁸ Xiang Nanping, *jiangning zi zhi shi yan xian gai kuang ji gong wen guan li cai zheng jing zheng shi xi bao gao*, 74.

If the actual effect and quality of administrative implementation was uncertain, then the new administrative burdens and the costs of the reform were far less ambiguous. The faith in the machine-like rationalization and bureaucratization of administrative process made it extremely important to ensure that documents were circulated smoothly and that the relevant information was included within them. No one was allowed to withhold or misplace documents and information, less they slow down the whole system. In this situation, disciplining and monitoring individual employees' processing skills became necessary. Today, the Internet and personal computers would keep records of every document delivery automatically. However, in 1930s Jiangning, every transfer of a document from one section to another- or even a desk to another - had to be written down in books of document transfer, if supervisors really wanted to fulfill a real time trace of task status and responsibility of individual clerks. As a result, the maintenance of a high efficient administration was in large part based on a lot of paper work. Within the Jiangning experimental county, in addition to the general books of document receiving and delivering, every section also had its own book(s) to keep record of document transfer. In other words, there were at least eight record books being written, passed around, and checked by people everyday. The work of writing down every transfer became in itself a waste of resources and time. The following suggestions made by a Central Politics School intern in Jiangning best indicate this problem of public administration. At first, the intern suggested that to prevent the general book of document delivering from being worn out too quick, the book should not be moved to and signed by a section every time a document was assigned to the section. Any transfer between the general office of document receiving and delivering and the sections should be recorded on another new book, used only for this purpose. Additionally, the intern also recommended that a copy of all received documents should be given to the magistrate, so as to

keep the county's top leader informed. This was despite the fact that two similar copies were already generated for the general staff and the general office. The most constructive advice this intern gave probably concerned the concentrative deployment of document transcribers by the general staff, which could have made the workload of document transcription in different sections more even.¹⁶⁹ All these suggestions demanded the expansion of supportive measures and consequent expenditure. The problem, however, is that such expansion did not necessarily lead to a proportional increase in administrative "output," or any real improvement in the government's ability to solve its own or other people's problems. To sum up, it is safe to say that public administration was created in Jiangning at very high real cost, where the administrative efficiency, as a kind of new species, lived and grew in this artificial and closed-off administrative world.

All in all, despite the unprecedented fiscal and personnel backup, the Jiangning Experimental County was more of a political sample than a model that really worth other poor counties emulating. The public administration approach in Jiangning had to be responsible for the failure of the experiment, not because it consumed a huge amount of resources, but because the fundamental assumption and direction of public administration had been to rebuild a political/administrative reality which would be manageable and changeable according to the logic and methods of impersonal science. To the detriment of this rising discipline and its protagonists, the dream of public administration could hardly be used outside of the governmental office. The Chinese reality, and indeed any reality in the world, was not a factory or ideal city where people followed the rules of industry and science to organize their social life. Because though they could rely on sufficient funds and student officials from the Central Politics

¹⁶⁹ Xiang Nanping, *jiangning zi zhi shi yan xian gai kuang ji gong wen guan li cai zheng jing zheng shi xi bao gao*, 76-82.

School, the public administrators in Jiangning could establish a Weberian bureaucracy and fulfill a kind of governance based on technical rationality. However, such efforts were short-lived and fruitless. The story of another Central Politics School experimental county, Lanxi, is the subject of the following section and further demonstrates why Jiangning was a failure, despite all of its fancy achievements in rationalizing and scientizing county administration.

Section Three: the Lanxi Experimental County and Its Heterodox Public Administration

In the 1930s, Lanxi had a populace of about two hundred and sixty thousand people. Located in hilly country in the middle of Zhejiang, its size was approximately 737 km². Before the building of railroad, Lanxi had been the transportation hub that connected the seven provinces on account of its strategic location and convenient waterways.¹⁷⁰ Although it is tempting to assume that its geographic significance led to the establishment of an experimental county in Lanxi, the real reason was far more irrational. According to the memoir of Ruan Yicheng (阮毅成), Lanxi was actually chosen by the Shaoxing consultants (*Shaoxing shi ye* 紹興師爺), a social group that had almost monopolized the practical knowledge and skills of county governance ever since the 16th century, and who advocated the Zhejiang provincial government in order to keep the burdensome county administrative experiment far from the provincial capital of Hongzhou, where the shrewd bureaucrats worked.¹⁷¹ Whether or not this anecdote is true is

¹⁷⁰ Huang Xisu, “Lanxi shi yan xian tu rang cai ji ji qi chu bu zhi kao cha (Lanxi’s Soil” Gathering and Its Preliminary Analysis), *Tu rang yu fei liao (Soil and Manure)* 1(4) (1935), 3. Fang Xinde, *Guo min zheng fu shi qi Zhejiang xian zheng yan jiu (The Research of Zhejiang County Administration during the Time of Nationalist Government)* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang University Press, 2012), 284.

¹⁷¹ Ruan Yicheng had been a law professor in the Central Politics School and the school’s second dean of the department of law. In addition, he had been the chief of the provincial hall of civil administration (*min zheng ting zhang* 民政廳長) during the most time of the war against Japanese invasion. In other words, he was very familiar with the administrative reality and the inside information in Zhejiang. Moreover, as a Hongzhou native, Ruan was

beside the point. The fact remains that from the very beginning, Lanxi did not have the money or the political support that was given to Jiangning. However, it was precisely this political reality that made Lanxi special. Intentionally or unintentionally, Lanxi was designed to experiment with new approaches to modern county administration on a social and material base that was closer to the condition of ordinary counties.

The new magistrate, Hu Ciwei (胡次威), was also the first dean of the department of law in the Central Politics School, and he proved himself to be a prudent administrator with clear political judgment. With hindsight, we can see that it was his realistic and compromising approach that won him a national reputation. As a nationally reputed political scientist put in 1936:

Regardless of the perspective of power, finance, and personnel, the Institutions of Lanxi Experimental County were most meaningful in terms of their being promoted to other counties successfully.¹⁷²

In fact, the success of Lanxi was even noticed by Chiang Kai-shek. He summoned Hu Ciwei in order to learn the most promising models of county administration.

Upon arriving in Lanxi, however, neither Hu Ciwei nor his newly graduated students knew what exactly county administration meant in reality, even though they had some general knowledge of modern public administration and law. An anecdote recorded by the first class Central Politics School graduate Chen Kaisi vividly catches the awkwardness of these new officials. One day, policemen escorted four criminals from another county into Lanxi. When these policemen asked the Lanxi county government to take over the escort, none of new officials knew what to do. This embarrassment did not end until an old backman, who was

very likely to be acquainted with those Shaoxing consultants. Therefore, the anecdote recorded by Ruan should be reliable. Fang Xinde, *Guo min zheng fu shi qi Zhejiang xian zheng yan jiu*, 287.

¹⁷² Chen Zhimai, "Man you za gan er" (Random Thoughts when Traveling Around 2), *Du li ping lun (The Independence Review)* 224 (1936), 19.

probably uneducated, showed his college graduated supervisors the procedure.¹⁷³ This story indicates how administration textbooks could only cover a very limited part of the real processes of administration. There were too many “tiny” but “necessary” things that could only be learnt through practice.

Under the circumstances, Hu soon realized that he and his greenhorn students could not handle the real administrative procedures without the help of experienced bureaucrats. For this reason, a very experienced Shaoxing consultant in his sixties was invited by Hu to be the chief of staff of the county government (*Xian fu mi shu* 縣府秘書). Shaoxing consultants were widely known as the shrewdest group when it came to handling the knowhow during the Ming and Qing officialdoms.¹⁷⁴ Before the Republican era, it was practically a custom for officials who were going to be county magistrates to hire one or two Shaoxing consultants to help them deal with official documents and thorny tasks, such as tax collection and litigation mediation. Such conventional wisdom had been scorned by modern intellectuals, who saw it as evidence of incapable pre-modern official scholars who did not know how to govern without the help of dirty hacks. As widely accepted among the modern educated public as this stereotype might have been, once these students took on real administrative responsibility and realized the limitation of textbook knowledge it was soon shown to be ignorant and wishful thinking. As a Central Politics School intern recorded in his working log after listening the lecture of Hu Ciwei, who shared his own practical experience as an incumbent official with his students in 1935:

Local administration as a class seems to be emphasized by the school authorities; four hours a week and through a whole year. The credit of the class is so much that no other classes can rival it. However, because the teacher of the class had no real research, everything he taught was

¹⁷³ Chen Kaisi, *hui shou ba si nian*, 53-54.

¹⁷⁴ Hu Ciwei, “Wo zai Lanxi zi zhi shi yan xian dang xian zhang” (My Experience as the Magistrate of Lanxi Experimental County), *Zhejiang wen shi zi liao* (*Historical and Literary Materials of Zhejiang*) 70 (2002), 237.

impractical [*Bu qie shi ji* 不切實際], the students in our class all felt it a burden to take the class... [Hu Ciwei's] speech was so practical and it all came from his real experience of facts... Some intern said: "listening to Mr Hu's speech exceeds taking a year-long local administration."... [Hu talked about] mistakes made in the earlier period of [the experiment]; first, looking down on the importance of official document writing; Second, neglecting budgeting; Third, only focusing on tasks but not on human aspects. These three mistakes had caused almost an insurmountable amount of hindrance. Now, these previous flaws have been thoroughly eliminated.¹⁷⁵

Firstly, this quotation reveals the useless parts of the public administration curriculum provided by the Central Politics School. Apparently, more than a few students had been dissatisfied with the pure theories and principles that lacked any real foundation. Secondly, those mistakes outlined by Hu Ciwei demonstrated the advantages of hiring Shaoxing consultants and other "traditional bureaucrats." These experienced governmental employees had no fantasy about the universal power of science and a machine-like social mechanism, and knew all too well that administration was about coordinating of a lot of people that worked in different governmental units. For this reason, the wording and content of official documents was important because it decided the nature of a task, and the units and people one was going to have to negotiate and work with. As Hu Ciwei realized, only focusing on tasks was ridiculous, because this attitude assumed that tasks were by nature technical problems that had nothing to do with human factors. Few things, if any, in the administrative process were entirely impersonal and technical. All this "bloody" understanding and experience could only be acquired after Hu Ciwei and his students left the campus of the Central Politics School and encountered concrete administrative problems in person. No wonder, then, that the intern who wrote down the points of Hu's speeches could not help but laud more praise at the end of internship report: "Listening to your speech today

¹⁷⁵ Zhou Shouhuang, *Qu xian xian zheng shi xi bao gao yu Lanxi shi xi ri ji (The Internship Report of Qu County Administration and the Lanxi Internship Log)* IRNS 198, 123-126.

excels studying books for ten years”(Jin ting yi xi hua sheng du shi nian shu 今聽一席話, 勝讀十年書).¹⁷⁶

This realistic and practical attitude of Hu Ciwei administration is central if we are to understand the county administrative experiment in Lanxi. It is very different from the orthodox public administrative mind, which highlighted an impersonal, standardized, and therefore scientized approach rather than a subtle comprehension of humanistic difference. With this in mind, in this section I focus only on administrative innovations that were heterodox to public administration, and dismiss classic public administration practices. There were still plenty of the latter in Lanxi, because this experimental county basically emulated the Jiangning model to organize its initial administrative framework. Therefore, in terms of institutional similarity, Lanxi, especially its county government, was of little difference from Jiangning. However, outside the county government as an administrative institute, the county administration as a practice in Lanxi had its own distinct characteristics.

The first and most critical characteristic of Lanxi that renders it distinct from Jiangning was its sub-county organization and its approach towards effective forms of social control. Compared to Jiangning, where more than 600 regular policemen were well paid and well equipped by the rich county government, Lanxi could only afford 180 officers. For a county that had over 260,000 people, such a small police force was inadequate. In addition, Lanxi was a declining transportation hub where gangsters and their criminal activities, such as kidnapping and drug smuggling, were rampant. Maintaining social order in Lanxi was much more difficult than that in Jiangning, which lay just outside the Nationalist capital. Despite the huge pressure to maintain

¹⁷⁶ Zhou Shouhuang, *Qu xian xian zheng shi xi bao gao yu Lanxi shi xi ri ji*, 181.

social order, fiscal shortages made it impossible for Hu Ciwei and his students to emulate Jiangning.

The police force was but one of many channels for the administration to penetrate into grass-root society. In parallel with the police, the establishment of a sub-county administrative apparatus was also important. For resource abundant Jiangning, it was natural to achieve this goal by promoting a full bureaucratization of grass-root government. A chain of regular and bureaucratized township and village offices (*xiang zheng gong suo* 鄉政公所) were soon staffed with paid officials and clerks. Within a relatively short span, every township and village in Jiangning had its own standardized formation of government workers to enforce orders from the county government and handle local affairs. Such a highly rationalized grass-root level bureaucracy was a modern design inapplicable to Lanxi, which had no such funds to bureaucratize its local organizations.

Be that as it may, the county was able to mix Jiangning's high modern approach with available indigenous resources. Instead of giving each township or village an office and staff, the county authorities set the joint township/village office (*Xiang zhen lian he ban gong shi* 鄉鎮聯合辦公室) which allow the government to administer several townships or villages with one bureaucratized grass-root administrative unit. Certainly, the efficiency and service provided by this meant-to-be-overloaded administrative unit could not rival the full-fledged sub-county administrative system in Jiangning. Those joint township/village offices, after all, only offered a relatively effective and economic way to control the rural society.¹⁷⁷ Well aware of the limitations of the joint township/village office when it came to dealing with criminal activities,

¹⁷⁷ Li Guowei, "Zhong yang suo she zhi de liang ge shi yan xian-Jiangning yu Lanxi," 123.

the county authorities resorted to a more “traditional” governmental practice, the baojia (保甲) system, to assist the thin administrative coverage.

Baojia was a time-honored ruling institution used by various Chinese dynasties to control grass-root rural society. Its basic principle organized every ten households into a jia (甲), and every ten jia formed a bao (保). Residents in baojia were collectively responsible for maintaining their own social order, and performing duties such as paying corvee and tax. If a member in a jia or bao failed to serve the duty, or committed a crime, the other people in the same jia or bao would all be punished together, unless they reported the situation to the official in a timely manner. This institution of mutual surveillance had enjoyed intermittent success throughout the history of imperial China. In general, it was a cheap and relatively useful way for the pre-modern empire to both control the society and extract its resources. However, more often than not, it was only seriously enforced in areas of unrest or during times of war by dynasties that faced internal rebellion or external invasion. The reason for this is simple: maintaining such a grass-root social network of control itself required painstaking effort and resolution. The last efforts to revive baojia were made in the 1850s, when officials of the Qing dynasty tried to quell the Taiping Rebellion. With the end of the “feudal” dynasty and the beginning of Republican era in 1912, this institution had long been denigrated as a backward and suppressive means of control that only served the interest of reactionary rulers at the cost of the freedom of the Chinese people. This, at least before the 1930s, had been the mainstream narrative.¹⁷⁸

But for the failure of Sun Yat-sen’s local autonomy (*Di fang zi zhi* 地方自治) agenda and the outbreak of the anti-communist campaign in the 1930s, baojia would have probably died out forever. However, the inability of the Nationalist government to fulfill feasible local governance

¹⁷⁸ Wen Juntian, *zhong guo bao jia zhi du* (*The Chinese Baojia Institution*) (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1935), 2-8.

compelled political leaders, including Chiang Kai-shek, to resort to the imperial will of governmental wisdom. Against this background, baojia was rediscovered and promoted as a practical method of consolidating the social order and asserting political control by Chiang Kai-shek's political advisors in 1931 during the campaign against the Chinese Communist army in Jiangxi. Many local officials soon found it convenient to rely on compulsory baojia leaders (*Baojia zhang* 保甲長) to promote various policies, from household registrations, corvee musterings, local defense, to broad social reforms and administrative executions. In many cases, baojia leaders were simply told to enforce governmental orders even though they were often incapable of doing those tasks.

Not everyone agreed with the value and potential of baojia. Baojia was widely criticized by intellectuals of both liberals and socialists bent, who shared deep doubts of the legitimacy and efficacy of this unilaterally top-down and pre-modern ruling practice. Many scholars in the 1930s were concerned that baojia would sabotage the local cultural nexus and enhance the “involution” and exploitation of rural resources.¹⁷⁹ How did the Chinese public administration community perceive this “invented tradition”? Because space is limited, it is impossible to deal with this problem in detail. In general, due to its American and municipal origins, the community of public administration in China paid very little attention to baojia. There were only a few articles discussing baojia in *Administrative Efficiency* and *Administrative Studies*, the two major journals for Chinese protagonists of public administration that looked to share their research and experiences. Even if some scholars did talk about baojia, they tended to focus on the institutional dimensions of baojia, such as the rationalization of baojia formation. They did not seem interested in gathering sufficient first hand experience through fieldwork. Zhang Chunming (張

¹⁷⁹ Yang Hongyun, “Min guo bao jia zhi du yan jiu fan shi shu ping” (The Review of Paradigms of Republican Baojia Studies), *Tian fu xin lun (Tianfu New Idea)* 6 (2013), 134.

純明), a political scientist and administrative scholar in Nankai University, was one of a few exceptions who had actually studied baojia in person. He was fully aware of both the potential and the limitations of this pre-modern institution when it came to organizing and training people for policy implementation, conscription, and state-building. For example, he insightfully pointed out that the value of training able-bodied men through baojia as an alternative form of social mobilization should not be judged purely according to its military efficacy. He also argued that baojia could only work in a rural society where people had much closer social ties. For these reasons, Zhang Chunming warned vehement baojia supporters that baojia was only a useful expediency for the backward China. It was definitely not the panacea for all administrative problems. He still believed that the ultimate solution was to cultivate the people's ability to govern themselves.¹⁸⁰ Nevertheless, one can say that even though Zhang might not be sure whether baojia could be as effective an administrative tool as some officials imagined, he did not reject the ideal of connecting baojia with some broader rationalization of rural society.

Zhang's depth and insight was atypical among public administrative scholars. Most political and administrative scholars, including those who taught at the Central Politics School, kept silent on the issue of baojia.¹⁸¹ For our purposes, let us only focus on the position of Central Politics School professors. On the one hand, there were people like Mei Siping who actively neglected baojia. While baojia had been promoted to all provinces after 1934, the grass-root administrative units in Jiangning were not baojia, but *cunli* (村里), units of natural communities rather than an internally organized household system. Faced with the question from the Nationalist Party, Mei Siping emphasized that Jiangning's administration did not have the name of baojia. but it shared

¹⁸⁰ Zhang Chunming, "Xian xing bao jia zhi du zhi jian tao" (Reflection on the Current Baojia Institution), *Xing zheng yan jiu* (*Administrative Studies*) 2(3) (1937), 221-228.

¹⁸¹ There was no class relevant to baojia in the 1932 curriculum of the school. Of course, one can not exclude that baojia would have never been taught in later versions of curriculum, especially after 1934 when baojia became a national policy.

a similar essential function because the county government did promote mutual guarantees and collective responsibility through the *cunli*. This statement exposed how the Jiangning authorities, which had already had a sufficient professional police force deployed in the most stable core area of the Nationalist regime, were not interested in relying on rural compulsory organizations to enhance their social and political control.

However, this is not to say that no one in the Central Politics School appreciated *baojia*. On the contrary, the majority of the school's public administrators demonstrated a degree of approval for the renovation of this ancient institution. The most obvious reason for their acquiescence is that *baojia* was promoted by their ultimate patron, Chiang Kai-shek, and had been utilized by Chen Guofu in Jiangsu on a large scale. Even though few Central Politics School Scholars, including prolific authors and experimental county magistrates like Mei Siping and Hu Ciwei, wrote articles directly regarding *baojia*, from the words of their students, it is possible to make an educated guess that these public administration teachers must have expressed some positive attitudes toward *baojia* in the class. For example, Zhou Yibin (周異斌), a first class student who stayed at the school as a member of the faculty after his graduation on account of his excellent academic performance, took the job of executive editor of the journal *Jiangsu baojia* (江蘇保甲), and wrote several articles that promoted the institution. Unlike most of his classmates, Zhou Yibin had not taken a real administrative job outside the school. While Zhou definitely received plenty of second hand sources from the outside, his perspective, in some ways, may represent the most academic and theoretical wing of the school's public administration. Zhou's opinion of *baojia*, when compared with other opinions, was very positive and consistent with the official discourse that connected this reinvented pre-modern institution with broader agendas of reviving the Chinese nation. In Zhou's argument, *baojia* was the

centerpiece of state-building. It allowed weak and ignorant Chinese people to reorganize themselves and fight internal and external threats. Zhou repeated the official discourse that the organizational base provided by baojia was indispensable for future social and military mobilization, such as the fulfillment of local autonomy and modern conscription. If the baojia in the war against the Chinese Communist Party was still an emergent, semi-official, security mechanism, the one in Zhou's scenario was nothing if not an integral part of state administration and prerequisite to national survival. As he argued:

Our country is so weak today. Its future is worrisome and dangerous. If we want to organize people, and cultivate people's energy so as to achieve the goals of wiping out national disgrace, pursuing national power, and reviving the nation, the whole county must work together to fulfill the vital policy of baojia.¹⁸²

The passionate appeal of Zhou could not cover his lack of real experience. A reading of his articles demonstrates that Zhou's understanding of how baojia functioned in rural reality was rather superficial. For instance, he believed that by adjusting the range and number of township/village into the proper size, the problem of efficient control could be solved once for all. He entirely ignored the cost that accompanied his naïve suggestion of downsizing certain areas and increasing the number of sub-county administrative units. He also underestimated the difficulty of finding enough baojia leaders from a largely illiterate peasant population capable of enforcing all kinds of modern administration tasks.¹⁸³ Given that Zhou was remembered by many people in the school as one of the best students and teachers they had ever met, the shallow opinion of Zhou Yibin should not be treated as his personal problem but a collective

¹⁸² Zhou Yibin, "Bao jia zhi du shi shi zhi yan jiu" (The Research of the Enforcement of Baojia), *Jiangsu Baojia* 2(4), 11.

¹⁸³ Zhou Yibin claimed that finding proper personnel for baojia was just a "technical problem" (技術問題). Zhou Yibin, "Bao jia zhi du shi shi zhi yan jiu," 2-4.

phenomenon worthy of further analysis.¹⁸⁴ Here, my main concern is the discursive environment that allowed such a superficial opinion to publish by such brilliant graduate of the Central Politics School.

Allegedly, the legitimate source of public administration in the early 20th century was the power and preciseness of science, or more specifically, of natural science. Public administration was established according to the classic paradigm of 19th century science, which saw total impersonal objectivity as the highest goal, and the door that lead to absolute accuracy and, as such, the power of control. According to this paradigm, the task of building a geometrically perfect bureaucratic formation where mathematic decimalization overruled disharmonious reality was not only an ancient aesthetic need, but also a necessary stage in the practice of real scientific administration. In many ways, a true public administrator was obliged to reduce, if he or she could not eliminate entirely, the complexity and uncertainty of human reality to a minimum. From this perspective, what was wrong with baojia was that pre-modern China had found a scientific administrative principle when their techniques and knowledge had not been able to implement it. With the introduction of modern rationality and methods, the potential of baojia could finally be released, so long as the “backward” rural human reality and its residents could be properly improved to fit this delayed progress. In other words, the obscure but subtle similarities between the Chinese traditional ruling ideal and modern scientific ideology were revealed by baojia. Everyone could find something he or she wanted in baojiang, no matter if they were a modern public administrator or a cultural conservative (and there were plenty of both kinds of people in the Nationalist regime). Baojia was both traditional and practical in terms of feasibility. Baojia was also advanced, because of its preciseness and efficiency. Under the circumstances, it was almost impossible for public administrators to resist baojia, even though

¹⁸⁴ See Sa Mengwu, *zhong nian shi dai*, 38.

most of them had only a rough idea of its imperial legacy. The institution was supposed to bear the weight of administrative dreams, from modern conscription to large-scale social enlightenment. Therefore, even though Jiangning public administrators refused to adopt baojia, one can hardly say that the enforcement of baojia in Lanix had nothing to do with public administration. This paradox reveals the intricate connection between existing Chinese resources and modernity. Modernity was not simply imposed or introduced; it was adopted, combined and adapted. When the global militaristic discourse that had prevailed ever since the late 19th century and the Chinese anxiety of building a strong modern nation state are taken together, the fact that baojiao soon became a national policy that connected conscription to the Nationalist agenda of revitalizing Chinese society is totally compatible with public administration. In a sense, it was just a matter of time that baojia became an indispensable grass-root agent and the executive tool of the Nationalist government.

Against this background, the fact that baojia was taken seriously by the Lanxi authorities carries a great deal more meaning than Hu Ciwei's personal preference for its practicality. At the start, the county government basically emulated the old regulations and Jiangning's model, including its *cunli* system. However, when it received the provincial-wide order to promote baojia in late 1934, the county government soon turned its grass-root administrative units into baojia. This turn was by no means just implemented on paper. As an intern participating in the work described in his internship report, the county government began to organize baojia on May 1st, 1935. For a whole month, he and his classmates visited townships and villages all over the county, helping local leaders to fill out forms and solve concrete problems. The work would not be completed until the end of June 1935. Interestingly enough, the intern mentioned that concrete and technical problems were not solved by untried procedures enacted in advance, but by on the

spot reactions and by instilling a sense of competition among participants. He especially noticed the effectiveness of oral praise and reprimand in motivating good performances and embarrassing the poorer ones. Such improvised applications that appealed to senses of honor impressed the intern, who seemed to have expected to see standard operating procedures from the authorities when he arrived at the county..¹⁸⁵ One can infer from the internship report that the establishment of baojia in Lanxi was fulfilled with a close and almost immediate reinforcement from the Central Politics School interns, who overcame the fundamental limitations of low human quality in rural society by implementing modern household registration and other kinds of baojia tasks personally.¹⁸⁶

Although Hu Ciwei never discussed the value of baojia directly in his articles, he seemed to find in this institution an economic feasible way to appease rural society. As mentioned above, Lanxi had no financial resources to develop a full Weberian grass root bureaucracy in order to maintain social order. As a result, relying on local self-defense and a much smaller police force became an integral part of the county's money saving agenda. In this manner, they sought to achieve effective administrative control in a place where gangsters, drug dealers, and small communist guerillas remained active. The key of organizing self-defense was the establishment of baojia. According to extant sources and studies, by relying on baojia and the militia originated from this grass root administrative unit, the Lanxi county government did manage to improve the social order. Burglary, drug trafficking, and prostitution in Lanxi were basically eliminated.¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, given that the Lanxi authorities were able to launch large-scale able-bodied soldier

¹⁸⁵ Zhou Lingjun, *Lanxi shi yan xian min zheng shi xi bao gao ji Lanxi shi xi ri ji (The Internship Report of Civil Administration of Lanxi Experimental County and the Lanxi Internship Log)* IRNS 200, 180-186.

¹⁸⁶ Taking the working log of Zhou Lingjun for example. He had to proofread or directly draw those baoja maps and forms for baojia leaders whose paperwork was very unreliable. Zhou Lingjun, *Lanxi shi yan xian min zheng shi xi bao gao ji Lanxi shi xi ri ji*, 315-317.

¹⁸⁷ Li Weizhong, *er shi shi ji san shi nian dai xian zheng jian she shi yan yan jiu*, 213, 219-222.

training and then convene the first modern conscription in China in the spring 1936, baojia in Lanxi must have functioned effectively.¹⁸⁸ Baojia in Lanxi was an undeniable success, both in terms of the maintenance of social order and the construction of modern national defense.¹⁸⁹ Some sources also indicate that Hu Ciwei used baojia to consolidate the reform of land tax collection.¹⁹⁰

Thus while Hu Ciwei kept silence on baojia, he seemed to maintain a realistic attitude and perceive the institution as a given, since it was a national policy. In pursuing county administrative reforms, Hu cared more about how things should be done rather than what should be done.. Most likely it is for this reason that Hu Ciwei never bothered to enact standard operating procedures on how to handle problems that accompanied the enforcement of baojia. However, this is not to say that Hu Ciwei demonstrated no broad strategic thinking. As a matter of fact, he was very aware of the responsibilities he bore to his authorities when it came to setting a firm foundation for conscription by combining baojia policing with the able-bodied training of recruits.¹⁹¹ This was probably one of only two promotable administrative innovations made by the Central Politics School officials during the prewar era. Can this achievement be attributed to the mind of public administration? It is not easy to answer this question. As we have

¹⁸⁸ Hu Ciwei, “Cong shi guo min dang zheng bing gong zuo de hui yi” (The Memoir of Pursuing the Nationalist Work of Conscription), *Shanghai wen shi zi liao (Shanghai Literary and Historical Materials)* 55 (1986), 137-143. The revival of baojia in modern China can not be only seen as a control strategy. It was also about the overall agenda of modern state building in which baojia was the foundation of establishing a national army formed by decent citizen draftees rather than rogue mercenaries. See Chen-cheng Wang, *Promoting Domestic Affairs through Military Directives* (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2007), 141-146.

¹⁸⁹ Li Weizhong, *er shi shi ji san shi nian dai xian zheng jian she shi yan yan jiu*, 214-219. In contrast, modern conscription was never fulfilled in Jiangning. Nor was grass-root democratic election which was the major excuse for the Jiangning experimental county to dismiss the promotion of baojia.

¹⁹⁰ Yin Hongchun, “Min guo shi qi de di fang cai zheng yu xiang cun zheng zhi-yi Zhejiang Lanxi wei zhong xin jian lun “nei juan hua” mo shi” (The Local Finance and Rural Politics in Republican Era: a Case Study of Zhejiang Lanxi and a Critique of “Involution” Paradigm), *Guangxi shi fan da xue xue bao: zhe xue she hui ke xue ban (The Bulletin of Guangxi Normal University: Philosophy and Social Science)* 45(1) (2009), 111.

¹⁹¹ Hu Ciwei, “Zhong yao xian zheng wen ti gai jin yi jian (xu si)” (The Suggestion of Improvement of Important County Administrative Issues 4), *Xing zheng yan jiu* 2(3) (1937), 317.

seen, Hu Ciwei himself was critical of theory-oriented public administration and dedicated to pursuing practical solutions to real administrative problems. However, it is undeniable that the human resources at his disposal, though not so numerous as they were in Jiangning, were high quality people who had been trained to be public administrators. As such, one can perhaps say that Lanxi experienced a kind of heterodox public administration. It was public administration, insofar that its ultimate goal was to build an institutionally rationalized and bureaucratized local government that could be homogeneously administered throughout the whole of China. At the same time, it was heterodox because the Lanxi way, as pointed out by Hu Ciwei, paid more attention to humanistic factors, things that were deemed to be indisposable according to technical or scientific measures. Thus the adoption of *baojia*, on the one hand, was a corollary of public administrative thinking. On the other hand, *baojia* also stands as a reflection of the high modernism of Jiangning experimental county, and an acknowledgment of Chinese humanistic reality. China was a county with a profound imperial heritage that could not be denied and should be used. The tension between the impersonal tendencies of modern public administration and the impetus to return to Chinese humanistic elements is best revealed in Hu's suggestion that *baojia* members should be compulsorily trained as detectives.¹⁹² Troubled by a shortage of funds and resources, like the other incumbent officials observed by Zhang Chunming, Hu and his students had a tendency to overexploit *baojia* as omnipotent tool that could homogenize society. But in addition, the policy was based on a certain imaginary of human nature that was very different from the atomized humanity upon which public administration was set. Hu Ciwei envisioned that voluntary *baojia* detectives would be perceived by the people as reliable, honest, and upright.¹⁹³ In this regard, Hu's unfulfilled idea was a premonition of the bound-foot detective

¹⁹² Hu Ciwei, "Zhong yao xian zheng wen ti gai jin yi jian (xu si)," 547-548.

¹⁹³ Hu Ciwei, "Zhong yao xian zheng wen ti gai jin yi jian (liu xu)," *Xing zheng yan jiu* 2(6) (1937), 647.

teams (*Xiao jiao zhen qi dui* 小腳偵緝隊) that emerged in the 1950s in Communist China.¹⁹⁴ It is a subtle, but crucial transition, to move from a basis of machine-like human beings to a human narrative that contains more motives, some of which elude social science, which only focuses on objectified psychological mechanisms. This Chinese human theory would be developed further after 1937, when the war broke out. Here, it is suffice to say that Hu's new approach was not merely a more practical attitude. It involved a very different way of imagining and understanding human reality.

To further explain out this little bit of abstract change, it may be beneficial for us to discuss another promotable administrative innovation made by Central Politics officials in Lanxi - the county's special way to "clear up land tax" (*Qing cha di liang* 清查地糧).

The origin of what the Nationalists called "land problem" (*Tu di wen ti* 土地問題) could be traced back to the Taiping Rebellion (1851-1864), which saw numerous counties in Jiangsu and Zhejiang reduced to war-torn areas. Plenty of land tax data was destroyed or stolen during the war. The lost land tax data was never fully recovered after the war, mainly because most county governments had trouble gaining financial resources to retrieve basic administrative control, let alone have the resources at their disposal to launch a county-wide land investigation. Without reliable tax data, the county governments had no choice but to entrust the collection of their major fiscal sources to the tax farmers who somehow had preserved some details of land tax records. As I will go on to explain, these tax farmers, or bookkeepers (冊書 *ceshu*), made their living by appropriating a significant part of the money that was supposed to belong to the government. Although the governments knew that their already incomplete tax base was being

¹⁹⁴ The bound-foot detective team is the nickname of those old ladies who still had their feet bound in the Communist era. These woman cooperated with the Chinese Communist Party voluntarily, freely, but actively in finding any suspicious person in their neighborhoods.

eroded continually by these bookkeepers, they could only resort to limited measures to bridle the practice of tax farming. No other personnel could replace these bookkeepers, who were usually natives of local communities and had hereditary knowledge of specific tax amounts and the real owners of scattered lands. Granted that there was no war, *ceshu* had its profound *raison d'être* in history. Because land had been exchanged and property divided countless times, county governments were less and less able to attach the land owners' names to the corresponding tax amount, unless the authorities updated their lists of taxpayers and Fish Scale Registers (魚鱗冊) periodically.¹⁹⁵ However, for a pre-modern county government that had very limited funds and personnel, maintaining timely updates could cost more money than the extra financial gains generated by thorough tax liquidation. In contrast, entrusting *ceshu* could be much more economically rewarding, so long as their surcharges remained acceptable for the taxpayers. In fact, they were also often willing to pay extra fees to the *ceshu*, in exchange for the time and energy that would have been expended in paying taxes further faraway from the village.

All in all, due to the demolition of war and the structural limitations of the pre-modern Chinese fiscal system, by the time the Nationalist Party rose to power the amount of land tax collection in a lot of counties rarely reached fifty percent of the original official quota, as set before the Taaiping Rebellion. More than a few counties were used to getting only twenty or thirty percent of *tianfu* (agricultural land tax 田賦). A shortage of land tax had become the status quo. The state could only rely on British controlled customs to get the income from the tariffs that formed the Chinese government's major stable fiscal source. In this situation, which Elizabeth Remick describes as local states that can no longer appropriate tariff income, finding other reliable financial sources was crucial for the provincial and county governments. As such,

¹⁹⁵ A Fish Scale Register was a map of the distribution of land pieces in a given area. Because the shape of adjacent land pieces on the map look like fish scales, this kind of map won the name Fish Scale Register.

one can say that recovering the local government's major fiscal base lay at the crux of the land problem in Nationalist China.

Technically speaking, the land problem was entirely solvable. The most thorough and effective would be to launch large-scale land measurements with modern technological means, equipment, and personnel. Aerial mapping, for example, was a widely adopted method. A scientific measurement could help the government attain the precise amount and quality of land. The government could then use the data to work out the price of land, and therefore the land tax. However, such scientific methods were not cheap. A countywide application of aerial mapping could require a million yuan, which was equal to the annual revenue of a wealthy county. Even if the government was willing to pay the fee (and the Nationalist regime did try aerial mapping in different counties on several occasions), the data gathered in this way would still be useless if no large scale personnel were also sent in to confirm the boundaries and owners of individual lands. Simply put, this kind of scientific measurement, however precise and efficient, was too expensive to be practical for 1930s China, which was still struggling with poverty. As a result, the Nationalists had to resort to other, less advanced but cheaper, approaches to solve the land problem.

There were definitely other workable measures that had been adopted by various dynasties throughout the long course of imperial history. The easiest way, as imitated by the Zhejiang provincial government in 1929, was to let people to report themselves how much land they had, if they wanted their property rights to be confirmed and protected by the government. This approach was named the land report (*Tu di chen bao* 土地陳報), and the Zhejiang provincial government spent three million yuan, used a hundred and twenty thousand people, and took over

a year to conduct a province-wide land report.¹⁹⁶ However, the outcome was pathetic. Due to poor preparation and implementation, this land report provided neither the addresses of the landowners, nor the location of land. As such, the government, still could not evaluate tax levels or find the owner to pay the land tax.

The failure of the land report in Zhejiang made the government wary of the land problem and its complexities. The most obvious lesson the Nationalist regime learnt from the frustrations was that without sound local administrative organizations, any reforms or efforts would be meaningless. It was against this background that the newly established Jiangning Experimental County began to launch another land report campaign in April 1933, with the support of Central Politics School students.¹⁹⁷

In stark contrast with the last land report in Zhejiang, the one in Jiangning was overseen by well-disciplined Central Politics School students. Learning from the flaws evidenced in the Zhejiang land report, the Jiangning county government redesigned the form of the land report so that it contained the most important information - such as the address of landowner. This turned out to be a useful approach, and the land report in Jiangning was much more successful. Within three months, more than 90 percent of lands were reported. The land tax collection, which in the past had hovered around 30 to 40% of the official quota, quite unprecedentedly exceeded 90%.

Be that as it may, the achievement in Jiangning had the benefits of its unique financial and personnel foundation. No other county in China could expect so many college and high school students to assist ordinary villagers to fill out forms and answer questions. The campaign took more than twenty five thousand yuan, which was a number no other county governments would

¹⁹⁶ Xu Shenlin, Zhang Zonghan, Zhou Jizong, Yuan Bingchang, *Jiangsu Xiao xian tu di wen ti yu tu di chen bao* (*The Land Problem and Report of Jiangsu Xiao County*) IRNS 149, 149, 93.

¹⁹⁷ “Jiangning zi zhi shi yan xian ju ban tu di chen bao” (Jiangning Autonomy Experimental County Held Land Report), *Xin wen* (*The News*) (1933), 563.

have dared to think about.¹⁹⁸ Moreover, even when such high quality personnel and fiscal resources were mustered, the government still could not comprehend the actual location, size, and the productivity of land, and therefore actually calculate the relevant land tax level. Land report as a way of recovering land tax data, after all, is only an expediency based on the one-sided confession of people. There was no room for the government to redistribute the tax burden, still less to extract a higher ratio of fiscal resources from certain lands. The land report also left the clarification of land property rights unsolved. The report only required land owners to provide their real names and addresses, not the tenants who might have owned the rights of topsoil (*Tian pi quan* 田皮權), and therefore received the majority of the land income for generations. These tenants who had the permanent right to use and manage the land should be apprised according to the modern concept of property right and as real property owners. In other words, the data the Jiangning county government received only allowed it to tax those who had nominal property rights and minor land rents. In this situation, asking these nominal landowners to pay a tax equal to the actual productivity of land would be unreasonable and unfair.¹⁹⁹ All things considered, the mode of Jiangning Experimental County, though an invaluable experience, was very unlikely to be adopted by most of the other counties, which had neither human nor fiscal support. As such, it is little wonder that the Jiangning method was severely criticized by the senior members on the Central Politics School board, as well as by the chairman of the Jiangsu province, Chen Guofu (陳果夫). In Chen's opinion, the land report in Jiangning was

¹⁹⁸ For ordinary counties, the monthly operation fee was only about 1000 yuan. See Li Weizhong, "Er shi shi ji san shi nian dai de di zheng gai ge shi yan- yi Jiangning Lanxi shi yan wei ji ben fen xi yang ben" (The Land Administrative Reform in 1930s-Take Jiangning and Lanxi Experiments as Basic Samples), *She hui ke xue yan jiu* (*Social Science Studies*) 6 (2004), 126.

¹⁹⁹ Wang Ke, "Tu di chen bao yu fu shui zheng shou- shi lun min guo shi qi Jiangning shi yan xian de tu di chen bao" (Land Report and Taxation- on the Land Report in Republican Jiangning Experimental County), *Hua nan nong ye da xue xue bao* (*she hui ke xue ban*) (*Journal of South China Agricultural University (Social Science)*) 4 (2010), 127.

expensive and of little use.²⁰⁰ His attack was understandable. The revenues from the increased land tax were consumed by the Jiangning government itself, in accordance with the regulations of the experimental county that aimed to ensure sufficient financial support for the development of Jiangning. In fact, Chen Guofu's government had to give the county extra money in order to pursue the experiment. After so much money had been spent, the Jiangsu provincial government could get neither a real fiscal benefit, nor a promotable experience, from the experiment in Jiangning. Chen Guofu's perspective, therefore, was quite representative among many of the incumbent governmental and party officials.

As such, it is understandable why the Central Politics School needed to try out other approaches in its other experimental county, Lanxi. In this sense, Lanxi was not so much the sister of Jiangning as it was its critical respondent.

The land problem solution in Lanxi bears some color of legend. According to the account of Chen Kaisi, a first class student who was in charge of the land reform in Lanxi, the Central Politics School officials would never have known that there were extant Fish Scale Registers, compiled in 1866, had he not broken into a locked room in the county hall that had not been opened for decades and was said to be haunted by a fox ghost (*Huxian* 狐仙).²⁰¹ If this story is true, then the curiosity of Chen Kaisi turned out to be very critical to the following administrative reforms. After studying these Fish Scale Registers, Chen Kaisi realized that there must be another volume of the Fish Scale Register, accompanied by lists of tax payers that were compiled at the same time but kept by the semi-official *ceshui* and *maobu* (卯簿). Chen Kaisi

²⁰⁰ Chen Guofu, "Su zheng hu yi" (The Memoir of My Governance in Jiangsu), *Chen Guofu quan ji* 5, 117-118. Certainly, Chen Guofu's comments on Jiangning bore some political concerns considering that by the time he expressed his criticism Mei Siping had joined Wang Jingwei's collaborative regime. Therefore, Chen had very strong motivation of denying any achievement of Jiangning. However, as I will show above, before the war broke out, there were already people including Central Politics School students felt dissatisfied with the expensive Jiangning approach.

²⁰¹ Chen Kaisi, *hui shou ba si nian*, 57-58

would not have studied land problems had he not been assigned to work in the land administration section within the Zhejiang provincial government, a place where no real work had been done since the failure of land report in 1929. In other words, Chen Kaisi, who originally studied the land problem during his boring time in the office, soon realized the value of the old land data. Although worms and mold had damaged it, the data eventually provided the county government with a basis for new financial reforms, which would have been extremely difficult and expensive had the government been forced to rebuild its tax base from the ground. At it stood, the young Chen Kaisi formulated an audacious plan. While land ownership must have been transferred countless times since 1866, the size and location of individual pieces of would have largely remained the same. In other words, if the county government could manage to get the Fish Scale Registers that lay in the *ceshui*'s hands, which recorded the latest status of land ownership, they could use them to correct and update the original old land data. There was a relatively reliable set of Fish Scale Registers that could be recovered, and would save the expense of re-measuring every piece of land. Then, using the new Fish Scale Registers, the authority could set land tax levels and tax the real landowner. The point of whole plan was to trust in the data generated by pre-modern measuring and tax setting techniques. It was also based on the assumption that the *ceshu* were government's potential partners. Certainly, the new tax levels based on this old data were not an accurate reflection of the full taxability of land. The most advanced and effective way to decide the taxability of land would have been to go by the market price of land, which is in turn varied on the productivity and location and thus could only be ascertained after a series of high-cost social and scientific investigations. In the fiscally stretched Lanxi county, Chen Kaisi knew that such an investigation would be an unnecessary investment. On the contrary, when used properly and alongside the establishment of a regular

land transaction registration institution, the updated pre-modern data could, in theory, provide an expectable financial return on land tax. Even though Chen Kaisi had no idea whether or not his plan could work in reality, he reported it to his teacher and magistrate, Hu Ciwei.

After hearing the presentation of his young student, Hu Ciwei made an equally audacious decision. He appointed Chen to preside over the whole task, and defended this unprecedented move in front of the wary high-ranking officials in the Zhejiang provincial government. The authorities only approved the Lanxi land tax reform proposals after a fierce debate.

Nevertheless, both Chen Kaisi and Hu Ciwei knew that the outdated and worm-eaten Fish Scale Registers alone would only bring the land reform so far. To reduce the drag force, Chen Kaisi decided to invite all heirs of the Qing bookkeepers to share their own data with the authorities and thus join in the new tax system. Hu clearly understood that his precious tax books only gave him one chance to start another round of reform, and the stakes were raised because this was a place where the land report had become notorious because of the failed attempt in 1929. If he could not make good on this chance, any further land or fiscal reform would be infeasible for many years. Thus, he compromised with vested interests so as to lower the political risk.

To his surprise, many *ceshu* welcomed the proposal. For them, the dilapidated state of the land tax data and collection system had rendered *ceshu* an unrespectable job in the countryside. More and more people, especially powerful landlords, tended to buy and sell their lands without informing the *ceshu*, who were supposed to be the legal notaries of all land transactions. Despite the fact that the whole society blamed *ceshu* for profiteering from land transaction registrations and tax collections, the majority of *ceshu*, at least according to the account of Chen Kaisi, were in fact very willing to be formally included into the new land tax collection system so as to wash

away their public enemy stigma. At least in Chen's narratives, the first step of the reform was to be easily completed by giving *ceshu* a piece of appointment paper.

However, in reality, not all *ceshu* had reason to simply hand over their profitable private tax books in order to provide the outdated official records with the latest information that connected lands, owners, and taxes.²⁰² One can see the difficulties encountered by Hu's county government from the internship report written by a third class student, Liu Nengchao (劉能超), from the department of finance. The first challenge the government faced was that the authorities had long lost connections with the semi-official *ceshu*, and the county government had no idea where to find them. At the start, the government asked the semi-official tax collectors, *maobu*, to provide names and addresses. However, few *maobu* were willing to offend the *ceshu* and harm their collective interest for the sake of some money-seeking authorities. The county government was then forced to ask the district, township, and village leaders. Again, few chose to offend their local vested interests. Finally, Hu Ciwei's administration had no choice but to force policemen to find *ceshu* household by household. It took Hu Ciwei administration more than two months to get only the names and addresses of the 303 *ceshu* who owed the most updated Fish Scale Registers.²⁰³

²⁰² In Lanxi's case, *ceshu* was apparently not an official title that could only be given and acknowledged by the government. Fish Scale Registers seemed more important for those who were interested in participating in tax farming. However, not all people who owned Fish Scale Registers had the knowledge or ability to pursue the business. For example, the youngest *ceshu* in Lanxi was only seven years old. He was deemed by local people and the governmental record as a *ceshu* even though he had to entrust his business to a proxy. In other words, *ceshu* could be used to call those who actually own Fish Scale Registers but did not show up in land transactions. For the two parties in a land transaction, they might call the proxy *ceshu* even though the proxy did not own any Fish Scale Register. See Liu Nengchao, *Lanxi tian fu gai kuang zhi di ji yu shui zhi (The General Situation of Lanxi's Land Data and Taxation Institution)* IRNS 201, 340. In addition, according to Hu Ciwei's account, a successful *ceshu* in Lanxi could make about 200 *yuan* a year. At the time, a *yuan* could buy about 8 kilogram rice in Shanghai. 200 *yuan* could no doubt guarantee a well off life in the Lanxi countryside. Hu Changqing, "Qing cha tu di zheng li tian fu" (Liquidating Land and Land Tax), *Shi dai gong lun (The Public Opinion of the Time)* 119 (1934), 22.

²⁰³ Liu Nengchao, *Lanxi tian fu gai kuang zhi di ji yu shui zhi*, 352-357.

And that was only the first step. The government still had to collect all of the Fish Scale Registers and detailed land transaction records in the possession of the 303 *ceshu* before it start to correct its own old land data. This task was no easier than the first. Theoretically, all the Fish Scale Registers in Lanxi were divided up into 149 map sections (*tu* 圖, about the range of a few natural communities). Each *tu* should be managed by one *ceshu*. In reality, because *ceshu* was an inheritable business, it was seen so profitable that many people liked to buy and sell Fish Scale Registers that had been owned by *ceshu*. After years of such transactions, by the 1930s some *ceshu* owned more than one *tu* of Fish Scale Registers, while others shared a *tu* with another, or even many, *ceshu*.²⁰⁴ Accordingly, there were almost 303 different versions of the Fish Scale Register and their relevant transaction records, because every *ceshu* had his own style and special codes that he used to register the latest transformations of land. Considering that not all *ceshu* knew how to write (and even if they knew, they tended to make their writing hard to read for anyone but themselves or close family members), deciphering those secret signals was a challenge that rivaled archeologists' decoding of ancient languages. As a result, it took the county government another month to convince, by persuasion or force, those *ceshu* to work in the county hall with official transcribers and explain the meaning of their basically illegible private notes.²⁰⁵ During this period, Chen Kaisi visited every *ceshu* in Lanix at least once. Because his public administration education never taught him how to deal with rural people who had a strong hostility toward the government, Chen Kaisi could only seek conventional wisdom by being “condescending” and flattering every *ceshu*. For the first time, Chen Kaisi understood that authority of traditional mandarin could be more useful than a modern professional civil servant in the countryside. Although he rode an old horse to death, Chen Kaisi rushed to every

²⁰⁴ Liu Nengchao, *Lanxi tian fu gai kuang zhi di ji yu shui zhi*, 359.

²⁰⁵ Liu Nengchao, *Lanxi tian fu gai kuang zhi di ji yu shui zhi*, 364.

corner of the county in order to instruct the clearing up of this land data. In the process, the young Central Politics School graduate learnt that personal communication, rather than official notification, tended to be the most effective administrative approach.²⁰⁶

As a matter of fact, Hu Ciwei and Chen Kaisi would not succeed until they resorted to both carrot and stick, tricks and laws. On the one hand, Chen appointed all cooperative *ceshu* as formal official tax dunning attendants (*cui shou yuan* 催收員), who could still make a living by charging registration fees for land transactions but were no longer allowed to collect taxes their own.²⁰⁷ Chen also gave these new tax dunning attendants bonuses, so long as they helped to compile and update a certain amount of land data. On the other hand, Hu Ciwei organized a sudden arrest of thirteen stubborn *ceshu*, who had challenged the authority of the government right after a regular meeting had been held in the county government in front of the other *ceshu*. Ignoring any legal procedures or civil rights, the former law Professor Hu Ciwei actually asked the families of those arrested *ceshu* to pay a “ransom” in exchange for the personal freedom of their beloved ones. With the pivotal information acquired by various systematic and “arbitrary” measures, the Fish Scale Registers in Lanxi were eventually reunited and recompiled. Even then, the government still had no idea of the exact amount of taxable land, or extent to which taxable land had been concealed. However, it had at least retrieved a relatively reliable set of land data, and the rough location of taxable lands was accurate enough that the land owners who had previously seen the benefits of evading taxes came to realize that the authorities could now offer (some degree) of official certification, and that the government was now able to reconnect land pieces with their tax levels and trace the real names through the household system. Most

²⁰⁶ Chen Kaisi, *hui shou ba shi nian*, 70-71.

²⁰⁷ Here is a question: did the government also appoint the seven year old kid or the proxy the tax urging attendant? Did the kid *ceshu* get any compensation if he could not be a tax urging attendant? The extant sources do not give us a clear answer. See footnote 120.

important, compared to the steep 25,000 price of Jiangning's land report, Lanxi's recompilation of the Fish Scale Registers cost a mere 7000 yuan,²⁰⁸ The collection of land tax significantly increased, jumping from below 30% to over 96%. Last but not least, this marked the start of Central Politics School officials relying on pre-modern resources, such as Qing tax collection knowledge and their practices. This experience, as observed by the intern Liu Nengchao, combined scientific methods and traditional techniques. While he adequately appreciated the value of this compromised administrative approach, Liu Nengchao was not able to predict that this compromise would last for a long time, or that this state of exception was in fact the constant status of modern administration, which could be hardly perfected eternally by an ultimate scientific method.

Liu Nengchao's description also provides us a vivid picture of the tax collection process. In June 1934, Liu Nengchao was assigned to Lanxi for his internship. Upon arriving, he told Hu Ciwei that he was very interested in issues of land tax. Hu Ciwei thus sent him out to be the chief of a district section of land tax collection during June and August, when the collections were at their busiest. Everyday, Liu Nengchao had to explain regulations, tax amounts, and a host of other details to illiterate peasants who always kept a wary eye on governmental officials. In addition, as the supervisor of the whole district, Liu Nengchao had to check account books so as to make sure that every tax payment was accurate. During the tax-paying season, he had to get

¹²⁶ Lanxi shi xian zheng fu mi shu shi (The Secretary Office of Lanxi Experimental County Government ed), *Lanxi shi yan xian qing cha di liang ji yao (The Brief Record of Liquidating Land and Land Tax in Lanxi Experimental County) min guo shi liao cong kan (The Collective Publication of Republican Historical Materials)* 539 (Zhengzhou: The Elephant Press, 2009), 189. Land report in Lanxi was much cheaper for several reasons. To begin with, there was no real land measuring. The government was content with the data provided by the old Fish Scale Registers and land owners. What is more important, the lanxi county government largely preserved the old tax collection system and personnel while the Jiangning county government mainly relied on newly recruited officials and employee.

up at 5 o'clock in the morning, and did not go sleep until past midnight.²⁰⁹ Probably due to his brilliant performance during the tax season, by September Liu Nengchao had been appointed by Hu Ciwei to the position of general chief of Lanxi land tax collection, who was responsible for the whole county's land tax affairs. By April 1935, Liu Nengchao was already giving lectures to new arriving interns from the fourth class of the Central Politics School. According to working log of an intern, the main point Liu Nengchao shared with interns was not about tax collecting procedures, but how to disregard others' "faces," and apply pressure on big landowners and other people who purposely made tax collection difficult. Liu Nengchao's talk apparently impressed the intern, who thought Liu's words were "an great creative explication (*Yi da fa ming* 一大發明)." ²¹⁰ For the public administrative student who was used to focusing on impersonal methods and techniques, Liu Nengchao's emphasis on human factors and negotiative knack was not only creative, but also fascinatingly esoteric.

From the successful experience of Lanxi, it may be tempting to think that the "Lanxi model", if there was one, represented a feasible approach to the broader land problem. To a certain extent, the experience of Lanxi, which required less fiscal and human resources, was more likely to be emulated and fulfilled in other counties. As Hu Ciwei noted:

According to my experience and comprehension over the last few years, I think (1) land clearing up does not necessarily need land measurement. (2) It seems feasible for all places that have something similar to Fish Scale Registers to be just like Lanxi, when it comes to compiling fixing-land piece-to-household book [*Qiu di gui hu ce* 丘地歸戶冊] and issuing land using licenses [to land owners].²¹¹

Lanxi's experience and practice was indeed soon introduced to other counties. For example, the land data clearing up in Jinhua (金華), a county adjacent to Lanxi in the east, was also

²⁰⁹ Liu Nengchao, *Lanxi tian fu gai kuang zhi di ji yu shui zhi*, 274.

²¹⁰ Zhou Shouhuang, *Qu xian xian zheng shi xi bao gao yu Lanxi shi xi ri ji*, 130.

²¹¹ Hu Changqing, "Ging cha tu di zheng li tian fu (qi wan)," *Shi dai gong lun* 122 (1934), 24.

implemented smoothly under the supervision of Chen Kaisi, who was promoted to the position of Jinhua's county magistrate after his brilliant performance in Lanxi. However, one should not underestimate the sophisticated and painstaking implementation undertaken by Chen Kaisi and Hu Ciwei. Without their accurate personal comprehension of the task's tempo, its detailed procedures, and some skillful *ceshu* mitigation, it is uncertain whether the land data clearing up would have been done so quickly and successfully. At least, when Zhenjiang (鎮江) county in Jiangsu attempted to follow the Lanxi route, it foundered entirely. *Ceshu* in this county were much more politically organized and savvier than their counterparts in Lanxi. This local humanistic difference was ignored by the Zhenjiang authorities, who simply imitated the written procedure of Lanxi without making any necessary adjustments. As a result, the county government had no idea what to do when all *ceshu* in its jurisdiction simply boycotted the policy.

Based on these previous lessons, the technique and strategy of land report was further improved - and in a sense perfected - in Xiao county (蕭縣) of Jiangsu. As an intern pointed out, the land report in Xiao county represented the great synthesis of all other land reform approaches. Chen Guofu also believed that the Xiao county approach, compared to that in Jiangning, was much more feasible and economically viable. Interestingly, some Central Politics School officials, including Chen Guofu, considered the Xiao county approach to be the most sophisticated version of land report. However, this was not because it involved the application of professional technology and knowledge, but because it was based on the intentional downplaying of modern technology.

To begin with, the government relied on Fish Scale Registers compiled by the Qing local government during the 1870s to get a rough idea of the amount of land in a specific region. After that, land measuring technicians were sent to the local area. The mission of these technicians was

not to get the precise data of land size and quality by using modern technology and measuring equipment. Instead, they just needed to acquire approximate data of individual pieces of land, which they did by erecting four stakes as datum marks and then measuring the land with human steps. The data compiled from this pacing technique was definitely not as precise as that generated by modern measuring equipment. However, the cost of this seemingly primitive technique was decidedly lower than that of aircrafts and instruments, and the quality of data was good enough for both the government and the people to mutually agree on the amount of land tax.²¹² Because the county government had learnt from Jiangning and Lanxi's experience, the whole reform only cost 24,568 yuan, and achieved an unprecedented degree of accuracy. The county government not only identified the "actual" size and location of every individual piece of land, but also its quality and therefore the proper tax level of land. Because of this accurate data, the chaotic and unfair distribution of the land tax burden was solved for good.²¹³ Moreover, as the Central Politics School interns working in Xiao observed, the Xiao method was even feasible in counties where Fish Scale Registers had been lost entirely, since the cost of measuring land on the spot had been significantly reduced by their "innovative" measuring technique. In any case, it is clear that Xiao's approach would not have been developed had they not drawn inspiration from Lanxi's method of adopting pre-modern imperial techniques.

After comparing the two experimental counties run by the Central Politics School, Li Guowei (李國維), an insightful observer, pointed out that:

²¹² Xu Shenlin, Zhang Zonghan, Zhou Jizong, Yuan Bingchang, *Jiangsu Xiao xian tu di wen ti yu tu di chen bao*, 68

²¹³ Xu Shenlin, Zhang Zonghan, Zhou Jizong, Yuan Bingchang, *Jiangsu Xiao xian tu di wen ti yu tu di chen bao*, 320. Ever since the Ming dynasty, all taxable lands in Xiao county, probably also in the most part of China, were attributed into three kinds, the subject (*min tian* 民田), the guardian (*wei tian* 衛田), and the discount (*jian ze tian* 減則田). Subject lands were owned by ordinary people and had the highest tax level while guardian and discount lands were owned by the imperial army and families of royal concubines respectively and enjoyed varied levels of tax favor. This tax distinction was preserved by the Qing and Republican government which simply followed the outdated old practice. The land reform in Xiao county eventually canceled this anachronistic fiscal discrimination and taxed all lands only according to their qualities.

Jiangning's experimental mode can be applied to prosperous and rich areas, whereas Lanxi's is more suitable for impoverished and barren places. Thus, the achievement of Jiangning is amazing reconstruction and modernizing innovations. As for Lanxi, [its achievement] lies in several industrious and practical methods. Jiangning is just like a well-off family, which already has food and clothing consumption met and can pursue innovations off the basis of its living status. Lanxi is a poor and declining household, which is frequently exposed to the risks of chill and hunger. Its way is to find a preliminary solution from suffering to living.²¹⁴

Although both Jiangning and Lanxi bore the name of "experimental county," the geographical and economical conditions in two places were quite different. Jiangning is in the core area of lower Yangtze delta, where fecund alluvial plains and well-developed irrigation had undergirded a highly commercialized economy and society for centuries. A direct suburb of the national capital Nanjing, the fiscal resources and infrastructure bonus Jiangning in 1930s received were actually more abundant than that its economic status could afford. On the contrary, Lanxi was a mere former transportation hub, which had been in decline ever since the construction of the railroad bypass. The agricultural potential of the county was limited by its mountainous terrain and poor sandy soil.²¹⁵ While the land tax quota in Jiangning was 1,070,000 yuan, in Lanxi it was less than 363,431 yuan.²¹⁶ In this sense, Lanxi was indeed "a poor and declining household," even though its resources and economic conditions were much better than a lot of other hinterland counties.

By highlighting the huge difference in the resource base between the two experimental counties, Li Guowei was able to see that feasible approaches to modern state building could mean very different things in different places. The application of the most advanced administrative measures and increasing state involvement did not guarantee a universal solution to various administrative problems that were generated in a variety of local contexts. Alongside

²¹⁴ Li Guowei, "Zhong yang suo she zhi de liang ge shi yan xian-Jiangning yu Lanxi," 135.

²¹⁵ Huang Xisu, "Lanxi shi yan xian tu rang cai ji ji qi chu bu zhi kao cha," 12.

²¹⁶ Liu Nengchao, *Lanxi tian fu gai kuang zhi di ji yu shui zhi*, 442-443.

other conditions, personnel/fiscal resources and socioeconomic status were certainly very central to ascertaining what strategy would work best. Although Li Guowei gave both Jiangning and Lanxi credit for their value in developed and underdeveloped regions respectively, his observation of fundamental differently administrative orientations compels us to rethink whether or not the orthodox public administration route as practiced in resource-rich Jiangning really represented a properly viable administrative mode for China. One needs not be a public administration expert in order to admit that the people and funds consumed by the rationalization of the Jiangning county administration would be an unaffordable, if not a disastrous, burden for a Nationalist China which generally had had extreme difficulty extracting resources from its already fragile agricultural economy.

Moreover, the achievements in Jiangning were, in a larger sense, still acquired by a *realpolitik* that was neither mentioned by Li Guowei nor included in the technical horizon of public administration. Even though the distinction between politics and administration was the defining characteristic of the US public administration so valued by many Chinese intellectuals, in China the reality of discursive distinction was as unrealistic as it was in America. An extract from a Central Politics intern's working log catches the more obscure political aspects of the Jiangning Experimental County. The following quotation outlines the main points of a panel talk held by the county general staff and section leaders for rookie interns on Wednesday, April 3rd 1935:

1. How to apply scientific methods in work.
2. The process of land report in Jiangning:
 - A. Take the strategy of divide and conquer. One by one, gradually cut the alliances between former county staff, bookkeepers, and land tax collectors.
 - B. Hold the land report.

C. Wait so as to uncover the malpractices of land tax collectors, and announce that they are wanted (the purpose of the announcement to let the misbehaving personnel flee, so they will not be a hindrance.)—all actions should be kept secret in advance....²¹⁷

The unintended juxtaposition of a short mention of the scientific method against a far more detailed set of tactic steps can be seen as illustrative of the real relationship between politics and administration. If Jiangning county's only real achievement was not the rationalization of county bureaucracy, which was of little use to most other counties, but the initial success of a land report that was indeed emulated and feasible in other places, we have to acknowledge that even this heterodox adoption of public administration was actually predicated upon a sophisticated manipulation of politics. As indicated in the working log, the removal of hindering local vested interests could not be fulfilled with an official order or by force, if that interest's league had not been weakened and public indignation immobilized. To prevent the former stake holders from launching a last ditch counterstrike, it was necessary for the Jiangning authorities to keep secret the real intention of the government, only leaking the information about the sudden arrests to those "criminals" when they would understand the government's unspoken message of negotiation and be reluctant to see the levels of conflict escalate. These were very subtle political gestures, and were not (indeed, could not be) taught through the formal curriculum of the Central Politics School. However, it may not be an exaggeration to say that those political tips, indecent and unprofessional as they might look to the modern political scientist, were a prerequisite of public administration. We should also say that the importance of politics can not be overemphasized. One needs only to remember the following fact: Jiangning was the showcase for Nationalist rule. Without this very political fact, it would be unlikely that the regime would

²¹⁷ Wang Yilin, *Lanxi shi yan xian nong ye cang ku kuai ji zhi du ni gao ji Jiangning shi xi ri ji (The Preliminary Proposal of Statistic Institution of Agricultural Warehouse in Lanxi Experimental County and Jiangning Internship Log)* IRNS 201, 161-162.

have concentrated so unproportionately personnel and money in a single county. Nor would the major power holders of the regime have been able to exert their influences over the county and wipe out local vested interests, which were commonly fierce in economically advanced counties.²¹⁸ Political mitigations were even a matter of life and death. Considering that both Chiang Kai-shek and the patron of the Politics School, Chen Guofu, had expressed a strong impatience regarding to the costly and slow progress of the county, they would have canceled the experiment rather than suppressed opinions from dissatisfied people (themselves included) had the under-the-table political bargains not been skillfully handled.²¹⁹

In contrast, the Lanxi experience was much more useful for China in terms of its feasibility and cost. Moreover, this approach, though it shared many institutional and discursive characteristics of public administration with Jiangning, had a much clearer sense of politics from the very beginning. Under the shadow of limited resources, support, and an unfavorable political atmosphere, Hu Ciwei and his students never dreamt of rebuilding an ideal society. Instead, they were willing to get things done within the existing politico-economic conditions. Although the “realistic” turn of these public administrators, as discussed above in passages regarding baojia, has some obscure connections to the logic of public administration, it undoubtedly also represented the indigenization of modern discourse and the initial stages of rethinking and readopting Chinese heritage. In the last part of this chapter, I will demonstrate how this

²¹⁸ Joseph W. Esherick and Mary Backus Rankin ed, *Chinese Local Elites and Patterns of Dominance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 19-21. Chang Liu, *Peasants and Revolution in Rural China: Rural Political Change in the North China plain and Yangzi Delta, 1850-1949* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 150-151.

²¹⁹ For instance, when Chen Guofu and other Central Politics School leaders referred to Jiangning’s treatment and proposed a joint request to Chiang Kai-shek for giving Lanxi a ten thousand yuan monthly subsidy, Chiang Kai-shek’s remarks sufficiently exposes a general dissatisfaction within the Nationalist regime. Chiang questions: “In recent years, under the name of experimental county, appointing inexperienced people as county magistrates and letting them experiment as they wish with often very huge subsidies has acquired little effect. Granted that there has some [effect], it is just normal [since so much money has been given]...it is really improper to do so in this time of hardworking...” As a result, Chiang only gave Lanxi 5,000 yuan. See Fang Xinde, *guo min zheng fu shi qi Zhejiang xian zheng yan jiu*, 288.

indigenization of public administration and the reinvention of imperial legacy became a common tendency among many Central Politics Students, who actually went on to work outside the experimental counties where the hegemony of public administration was at its strongest.

Section Four: Beyond Public Administration

Although many Politics School students had been sent out to rural counties in order to complete their internship, these students generally knew very little about the concrete techniques of correctly registering and taxing lands. Despite this, many students, especially those studying finance, nonetheless attempted to figure how to protect and amplify the land tax base of the local government.

As mentioned above, Liu Nengchao had shown off his abilities during his internship. His vivid and detailed description of the concrete process and techniques of not just tax collection but also building authority indicated a strong inclination towards the practicality rather than principles, or to mere regulations as they existed on paper. Not all Central Politics School students demonstrated as inexorable a focus on the minutiae of the administration as Liu had showed in his internship. As we have seen, Liu Nengchao oversaw the difficult steps taken by the authorities to establish ultimate control over the stubborn *ceshu*. The acumen of his observation process, on the one hand, seems to reflect a spirit of public administration that put more emphasis on the implementation of political goals rather than the goals themselves. On the other hand, one can sense from Liu and many other Central Politics students that what caught their attention were not the scientific methods and their truths, but self-aware deviations from the class notes and textbooks they had read at school. Although the reality varied from person to

person, more than a few Central Politics interns felt that what they learnt in the classrooms did not provide them with a precise or reliable conceptual framework to understand the actual processes of administration in Chinese local governments. Consequently, it was only a matter of time before some interns and students began to develop their own understandings and approaches towards a more workable administration. For example, a Central Politics School intern Wang Youming (汪友明) arrived in Jiangning in 1932, when the county had not yet become an experimental county. He noticed, and gave an accurate analysis, of the origins of the problem of land tax collection. However, when laying out the solution, Wang Youming's advice was very different from that of the later interns, who had worked in Jiangning's status-quo public administration. Wang resorted to the Ming *lijia* (里甲 though he did not use the name) system, and he did so very consciously as a way out of the predicament of having no money to pursue fundamental land measurement. *Lijia* was, by nature, a system that relied on rich households to take turns in being responsible for tax collection.²²⁰ Considering that *lijia* operated at a time background when the Ming capital (which was also in Nanjing) needed a cheap tax system to collect resources from the nearby rural areas, one could not deny that Wang's idea was feasible and a demonstration of independent thinking before either *baojia* or Fish Scale Register had retrieved their reputation as valuable imperial legacies. As a future governmental financier, the conceptual framework of public administration apparently did not stop him from thinking about the indigenous context where he had some first-hand understanding.

²²⁰ Wang Youming studied at the financial administrative section in the department of finance. He suggested that the government assigned ten richest and decent land holders in a collecting district to be alternately responsible for the land tax collection. Each assigned land holder took charge of collection for a year. The whole model was almost identical with the *lijia*. Wang Youming, *Jiangning cai zheng shou ru zhi yang e yu shui chu shui ru kao cha zong bao gao* (*The Main Report of Jiangning's History of Financial Income, Revenue, and Expenditure*) IRNS 55, 395. About the *lijia* system, see Timothy Brook, *The Chinese State in Ming Society* (London: Routledge, 2005), 32.

Another case comes from Guo Peishi, who had invented many formulas in staunch support of absolute scientific public administration. After graduation, Guo Peishi became involved in the rural reconstruction movement (*Xiang cun jian she yun dong* 鄉村建設運動), led by the philosopher Liang Suming (梁漱溟) who had been experimenting with his Confucian version of county administration in Zouping Shandong ever since the 1920s. We do not know why Guo Peishi, once a vehement public administrator, devoted himself to a course that was fundamentally opposite to the basic assumptions of modern administration. We do know that by 1936, he had a very different view on county administration. In a report written for the Research Institute of Rural Reconstruction, Guo reviewed all land tax reforms and proposed a perspective that he almost certainly would have disagreed with a mere four years ago. After giving a thorough survey of the land report in various counties, including Jiangning, Lanxi and Xiao, Guo Peishi concluded that the solution of land problem lay in the simplest approach: letting people report their own land data and pay the according land tax in exchange for official confirmation of their property rights. The government should accept the report provided by people, as it ultimately held the power to confirm all land transactions and transfers thereafter. This suggestion was by no means naïve. Guo Peishi had, in fact, a profound understanding about how landowners tended to conceal the actual size and tax amount of their lands. The once-vehement pursuer of preciseness had learnt from his four years of practical rural work that the scientific method could, and should, mean very different things in different social contexts. In 1930s China, the government's priority was to secure a reliable tax base, not to complete an accurate land investigation that may well provide necessary information for future reforms, but would not provide a fiscal income that exceeded its overall cost. Under the circumstances, it was entirely reasonable to sacrifice some fairness and some unreported lands in order to generally augment

the land tax collection throughout all the counties. The scientific method, thus, was not so much an objective and accurate technical measure as it was a methodical implement of an administrative task.²²¹ This perspective was also shared by Dong Zhongsheng, a graduate of the Land Administration College in the Central Politics School. He argued that the government should not expect the land report alone to revive rural China. The authorities should concentrate its resources on limited and achievable missions, such as basing taxability on the market land price rather than its size, and establishing modern institutions of land transaction and transfer.²²² Regardless of Guo or Dong, their opinions echoed Hu Ciwei's initial conclusion that successful land reform did not necessarily need measurements. They all represented the general, though not very obvious or collectively conscious, realistic turn of public administrators at the Central Politics School.

Given that Guo Peishi's change of heart was especially dramatic, let's return to his story. After finishing his work at the Institute of Rural Reconstruction, Guo Peishi decided it was time to put what he had learnt during the four years in various kinds of county administrative experiments into practice. He pleaded with the Central Politics School to assign him to a grass-root administrative position. His (somewhat unusual) wish was approved by the authorities in 1936. Guo Peishi became a chief of the third district (*Qu zhang* 區長) of Zhenjiang county. At first glance, Zhenjiang was the capital of the Jiangsu province, and the role of Guo Peishi's experimental district (實驗區) to the Jiangsu province was very similar to what the Jiangning Wxperimental County was to the whole of China. In reality, except for a period of prosperity during the latter 19th and early 20th centuries, Zhenjiang had been in decline ever since the value

²²¹ Guo Peishi, "Tu di chen bao zhi guo cheng yu mu di ji qi ju ti fang fa" (The Process, Purpose, and Concrete Methods of Land Report), *Xiang cun jian she (Rural Construction)* 5 :18-19 (1936), 66.

²²² Dong Zhongsheng, *Zhejiang sheng ban li tu di chen bao ji bian zao qiu di tu ce zhi jing guo (The Process of Zhejiang Province's implement of Land Report and Compilation of Land Piece Map)* (Taipei: Chengwen Press, 1977), 16566-16570.

of the Great Canal, which passed Zhenjiang was replaced by the railroad transportation. In addition, the district where Guo Peishi took the office was in a hilly area, rather than the more developed provincial capital that lay beside the Yangtze River and the Great Canal. In other words, Guo was definitely not at fancy gate of the provincial city, but out in a very rural place. The socioeconomic background was exactly the reason Guo Peishi wanted to work there. His goal was not to promote municipal administration or his “formulas,” which could only be used in a handful of cities. Instead, Guo Peishi wanted to develop an administrative approach that would be useful for most parts of China. Comparing what he did in rural Zhenjiang against his earlier extreme scientific administrative perspectives can help us understand why Central Politics School county administrators deviated from orthodox forms of public administration.

Upon his arrival at the third district, Guo Peishi did not attempt to enhance the professional bureaucracy, which had been organized abruptly and had functioned poorly during the previous years. Instead, Guo Peishi spent this time cleaning the shabby-temple-turned office, down on his own hands in front of his staff and the ordinary people who visited the district office. Guo Peishi entirely threw out the professional image of modern official when he chatted with visitors, who found the new chief of the district easy to get along with. Behind this laidback face, however, Guo Peishi was collecting first hand intelligence through personal conversations rather than official reports. Every night, after all the people had left, he wrote down anything he thought would be useful or important to the future administration. As he emphasized later in the *Service Monthly*, a journal published by the Central Politics School for its students to learn about practical experiences from the school’s graduates and incumbent officials, the key point of these seemingly casual conversations was to win the trust of the people, and thus get the most intimate comprehension of the ordinary rural residents’ needs.

After a period of information collection, Guo Peishi started to “do things” and take action. I use the phrase “do things”(Zuo shi 做事), because Guo did not order his employees to implement specific tasks. He emphasized time and again that “we should do things together.”²²³ This does not mean that Guo Peishi did everything with his employees. The point was that no task should be attributed to specific staff. Guo Peishi knew that he would arrive at an impasse if he relied only on the very limited personnel and fiscal resources of the district office to serve 45, 000 people who lived in poorly connected villages in accordance with the regular bureaucratic procedures. What he needed was not professionalized administrative experts, but generalists who could put down their work, understand the awkward expression of an old farmer who had burst through the door, and in a few minutes lead him to a doctor who could give his malaria-infected son a timely injection. To promote this generalist-oriented administration, Guo Peishi tried to coordinate different sections of the already over-stretched county government by moving from one office to another rather than through the usual system of official document notification. For example, when dealing with kidnappings, he would not just receive and deliver the report but find policemen in the county right away and sent them to the victim families and the village where the criminals and hostages were hid. For similar reasons, Guo Peishi did not resort to regular administrative measures unless he had no other choice. He reminded other Central Politics School students, for instance, that the best way to organize baojia was not to pursue numerical order on paper through administrative means, but to make able-bodied men understand the benefits of the policy. He also refused to rely on modern judicial institutes, although they were not too far away from his jurisdiction to solve civilian disputes. He would rather invite villagers to his temple-turned office, and form a general opinion that could be

²²³ Guo Peishi, “Ru he zuo qu zhang” (How to be the Head of Sub-county District), *Fuwu* 1 (1939), 26.

accepted by both sides. Meanwhile, he actively involved his district office in the daily lives of the people. To correct the rural custom of extravagant feasts, Guo Peishi hosted collective wedding ceremonies in the district office.

One may wonder if all Guo Peishi did was to arrive at an unwilling compromise with the reality of his poorly staffed office. In some ways, this perspective is correct. As Guo Peishi admitted, the salaried personnel he had was inadequate. He would not be able to update and manage household registration, if he only relied on the household police in the office and did not mobilize the service of local baojia leaders and primary school teachers. On the other hand, the total number of employees under Guo's command, including policemen, short-term and permanent school teachers, and students, came it at over 100 people. This amount of governmental personnel was univocal evidence of the administration building practices of the previous decades. The inner spirit of this administrative expansion had been precisely to establish professionalized grass-root governmental units. In this regard, Guo Peishi's resistance against bureaucratic professionalization was by no means a passive response to limited resources. Rather, it was a reflexive action that aimed to reverse the political trend which had led to a premature specification of all the governmental branches. To put it more precisely, Guo Peishi had no difficulty operating the growing state machine. He even embraced the idea of an all-powerful big government. However, he did see the limitations of a modern bureaucracy that was based on scientizing, and therefore, divided the political process up into standard steps.

This is not to say that Guo Peishi totally broke with his college education and profession. Admittedly, at best public administration only played a marginal role in Guo Peishi's endeavor. The discipline was reduced to the internal management of office affairs and the everyday schedules of his staff. For example, Guo spent a whole page introducing the concrete

arrangements of dining, clothing, housing, and transportation of the district office. He treated things like how to control the price of a meal, and how to accommodate 100 people into his small temple office, seriously. Nevertheless, even in these very technical details, Guo Peishi instilled political elements. For example, he standardized the cost and quality of different meals. The free lunch given to village leaders who visited the district office should be slightly better than the ordinary ones made for the office staff. His goal was to show the generosity and frugality of the district office, and at the same time impress the villagers who would inevitably notice the difference of food when they ate with Guo Peishi and other officials.²²⁴ This smart political application of administrative management, for one thing, indicates the effect of the Central Politics School public administration education. For another, the limitations of the new discipline are also exposed, insofar that they could hardly be used outside the office.

Though Guo Peishi did not serve in Zhenjiang for a very long time because of the Sino-Japanese war broke out less than a year after he took the office, he had enough time to develop his own new theory of administration. The Three-Barrel-In-One-Doing-Things Theory (*San gan he yi ban shi zhi li lun* 三桿合一辦事之理論), as he named it, clearly defied the spirit of professionalization of public administration. Based on his experience, Guo Peishi believed that the best administrations of the time must combine the use of barrels of pens (*bigan* 筆桿), of hoe (*chugan* 鋤桿), and of guns (*qianggan* 槍桿). Put more succinctly, an effective administration could not be achieved by merely enhancing the efficiency of official document processing, or the so-called rationalization of bureaucracy, without involving the agricultural production of the rural communities and the monopoly of violence. Relying on this “theory,” Guo Peishi was able to improve the administration of the experimental district within a few months, and received a

²²⁴ Guo Peishi, “Ru he zuo qu zhang,” 27.

laudatory tablet from the provincial government with the inscription "the whole district is luminous."²²⁵ With the experience and confidence he acquired in Zhenjiang, Guo Peishi would go on to further develop this Three-Barrel-In-One-Doing-Things Theory in a remote county in the inland province of Guizhou during the war.

Conclusion

The influence of Lanxi's county experiment and dissemination of Central Politics School graduates in Zhejiang reminds us that the experiments of county administration were not launched in a political-vacuum. Both local and national-level political change turned out to be very important for the promotion of the school's graduates and their public administration. Our focus in the next chapter is on a political episode that began in Zhejiang in the April of 1934, and it is worth a quick mention now. On this date, Huang Shaohong (黃紹竑) was appointed chairman of Zhejiang Province. Huang Shaohong was a former major military strongman of the Guangxi Clique, and became subject to Chiang Kai-shek after his defeat by Chiang in 1930. Because of his Guangxi Clique background and his own political capacity, on the one hand Huang Shaohong could be used as a middleman to negotiate with Guangxi warlords. On the other, he was also a lone wolf within the Nationalist central regime, and this made Huang useful as an unthreatening troubleshooter for Chiang. After 1930, Huang Shaohong was assigned to a series of positions, including the minister of the interior, whenever Chiang needed him. His appointment as the top leader of Zhejiang province, Chiang's hometown, was due to the political consideration of sending a neutral loner to mitigate a power struggle between two cliques within

²²⁵ Yang Boju, Liu Dawei, "Wo men suo liao jie de Guo Peishi xian sheng" (The Mr. Guo Peishi We Knew), *Yancheng wen shi zi liao xuan ji* (*The Selective Collection of Literary and Historical Materials of Yancheng*) 9 (1990), 182-183.

Chiang Kai-shek's patron network. In the process of resuming power, Huang Shaohong also tried to develop his own patron network. For example, Huang met He Yangling during his term as the minister of interior, and He became one of his major assistants. He Yangling was also a political lone wolf. Although he had been the Party Affair School instructor in 1927, he participated in the plot to overthrow Chiang's hegemony, and was wanted by the Nationalist regime in 1934. Fortunately to He, his criminal status did not last long. He Yangling was forgotten, and therefore forgiven, by the Nationalist government a mere few months later. This combination of Huang and He indicated the political character of Huang's new patron network. People in his network were politically agile and experienced, but not firmly anchored to a major political clique under Chiang Kai-shek's command. As a result, in order to gather supporters and expand his power, Huang's small clique was more open to new members and ideals. As such, after Huang took the office of Zhejiang provincial government, he soon showed a great interest in the progress of county administration in Lanxi. This attitude was part a sincere desire to do something right, and a political gesture to show friendship to Chen Guofu's CC clique, which was widely seen by contemporaries as the real boss of the Central Politics School. Huang Shaohong invited Central Politics School members to support his basic point politics (基點政治), which intended to establish a few experimental points in Zhejiang to try out new administrative approaches and policies. Under these circumstances, many members of the Central Politics School were hired by the Zhejiang provincial authorities to preside over or work on these basic points. For example, Wang Hao (汪浩), a researcher at the Land Administration College in the Central Politics School, was appointed as the magistrate of Pinghu Land Administration Experimental County. Dong Zhongshen took the charge of land administration, and promoted land data clearing up in the nearby Jiaxing(嘉興) county, which was under the command of

another Huang Shaohong's major assistants, the expert of local administration Wang Xianqiang (王先強). The Central Politics School graduate Liu Nengchao became the major aid to the Shaoxing county. The magistrate of this one million resident county was He Yangling, and he was very willing to use his former connections with the Party Affair and Central Politics School to invite the school's graduates to come and work in his jurisdiction. In addition, there were other Central Politics School graduates serving in Zhejiang.

Probably because Huang Shaohong's cooperation with the Central Politics School was not simply down to a consistent agenda, the basic-point politics performed by the Central Politics School administrators in various counties was not a monolithic form of public administration, but consisted of many different, if not entirely contradictory, strategies. For example, in the Pinghu Land Administration Experimental County, Wang Hao kept promoting the very expensive aerial method of measuring land, which had already been proven an uneconomic and impractical way of clearing up land data. At the same time, what Dong Zhongsheng launched in Jiaying was closer to a mixture of the Jiangning land report and the Lanxi land tax clearing up.²²⁶ In He Yangling's jurisdiction, ruling over one million people made the sub-county administrative organizations a more crucial issue.

Although Huang Shaohong's first term in Zhejiang would only last for just over two years, he had unconsciously prepared a political stage for Central Politics School graduates. In November 1936, Huang was transferred over to the position of chairman of Hubei province, which had previously been held by Chiang's most trusted aid Yang Yongtai (楊永泰), until his assassination in late 1936. He Yangling, Wang Hao, Dong Zhongsheng, and Liu Nengchao all went with Huang to Hubei. Neither Huang nor the members of his newly formed patron network

²²⁶ Dong Zhongsheng, "Jiaying xian bian zao zhi qiu di tu ce" (The Land Piece Map Compiled by Jiaying County), *Di zheng yue kan* 4(12) (1936), 1827-1847.

would have expected that they would return to Zhejiang within seven months. The War of Resistance against Japan unexpectedly broke out on July 7th, 1937. In response to this wartime situation, Chiang Kai-shek first appointed Huang Shaohong as the vice commander of the second warzone, to direct combats in North China. In December 1937, Huang was reappointed chairman of Zhejiang province. Huang Shaohong remained the top leader of Zhejiang for the following eight years, until the end of war in August 1945. Having only a few reliable cadres, Huang Shaohong brought all his Central Politics School subordinates back to Zhejiang. If people like Huang and He were quite politically shrewd, then their newly graduated Central Politics School subordinates were not famous for their political savvy. Trained as public administrators in local governments, these young officials, who might have sensed something of the impracticality of public administration and its subtle non-science political facets during their short prewar period working in Zhejiang, had neither the intellectual intention nor the resources to thoroughly deny the legitimacy of their public administration education. None of them had ever thought that they might have to abandon, or at least redefine the principles and practices of public administration, when they retook administrative positions in wartime Zhejiang. However, dramatic and drastic as this wartime change would be, it actually bore witness to the inevitable unfolding of a profound historical trend. As I will demonstrate and analyze in the next chapter, the extremes of wartime conditions made the reflexive deviation away from public administration on the part of the Central Politics School graduates faster and more resolute. In the broader sense, the modernity ushered in by the revolution was never aborted. However, its ethereal Western image was erased to reveal the earthly flesh and blood it had acquired during its time in China.

Chapter Two

The Rationality Project beyond Modern Administration

In the last chapter, we saw how graduates from the Central Politics School through the course of 1930s adjusted themselves to a reality that had little, if anything, to do with the scientific principles of public administration that formed the major part of the Central Politics School's curriculum. The previous chapter also explicated how adjustments made on the part of some Central Politics School officials were much more complicated than passive compromises made with the "old society." They were also not simply unfortunate deviations from the scientific management and rationalization of bureaucracy, which was supposed very characteristic of the actual situation in modern Western politics. As the matter of fact, the young Central Politics School officials had participated in a process of political reform whereby Western discourses and practices were fulfilled only through the adoption of many pre-modern and non-modern factors, which were often considered to be incompatible with political modernity. However, combined with indigenous Chinese and Non-Western elements though they were, the modern administration that was implemented in both the experimental counties directly run by the Central Politics School and the other ones staffed with their students were generally still on the tracks of Weberian rationalization. Institutionalized bureaucratic control was heightened, objective scientific measures were enhanced, and human and cultural dimensions were increasingly excluded. The narrative of rational bureaucratization had thus become ever more politically dominant. Had the war of resistance against Japan not broken out on July 7th, 1937, here is good reason to believe that the reform of the county administrations led by Central

Politics School officials would have hardly challenged the content of modernity as first formed and defined by the West.²²⁷

The war, however, greatly altered the course of political modernization in Nationalist China by uprooting that which had been founded in the Nationalist regime's core areas. Within the first six months of the war, the much better equipped Japanese army had forced the Nationalist government to give up its most prosperous cities and agricultural bases along the coast of China and the lower Yangtze delta (Jiangnan), where the majority of Central Politics School official had worked before the war. To avoid the Japanese military attacks, Nationalist local regimes retreated to previously marginal areas in the mountains and the hinterlands, where modern transportation was so underdeveloped that the semi-motorized Japanese army had struggled to conquer them. While providing some safe zones for the Nationalist regimes, these places also tended to be the least influenced by modern politics or socioeconomic changes before the war. As a result, the Nationalist officials and the including Central Politics School graduates had to resume and redouble their modernizing projects with far fewer resources and a much less modern infrastructure. These limitations made it inevitable that the administrative modes generated there would be very different from the prewar ones, and still more so from the Western "prototype". Under the circumstances, how political modernization (if any) would happen, and how such a modernization would stand in relation to the broader discourses of modernity was uncharted territory for most Nationalist officials. The emergence of this unknown realm of wartime administration is the main concern of this chapter. The protagonists remain the Central Politics School officials, who had been taught by their school to be the avant-garde of modern public administration. By looking at their wartime experiences, this chapter further demonstrates how

²²⁷ In this chapter, I will use capital Modernity to refer to a collection of discourses and practices that are habitually considered by mainstream Western media and their audience as the very characteristics defining modern Western societies.

high administrative ability and efficiency was only achieved because of a willingness to creatively adopt indigenous human resources with techno-scientific discourses and practices.

In Section One, I start with the story of a Central Politics School magistrate, Dong Zhongsheng, and his “hardline politics.” He consciously described these policies in a univocal narrative of administrative rationalization, and chimed with other Central Politics School officials who were able to further their rational understandings and methods with the passion of youth. In the same section, I then proceed to argue that behind this narrative of youth-save-country was a hard and difficult process, and that effective governance was actually achieved only after Dong and his Central Politics School team greatly revised their techno-scientific understandings of politics and gender. As to whether Dong Zhongsheng developed his administrative measures from his the prewar experiences with the Central Politics School officials or from his own wartime innovations will be dealt with in Section Two. The two pillars of public administration - logical, rational reasoning and scientifically advanced techniques - helped very little in Dong’s innovative administrative approach. Instead, the reflexive limitations in applying of these modern aspects were much more pivotal to Dong’s successes and the remedies he concocted for his failures. Finally, the last section of this chapter deals with the administrative approach of another Central Politics School magistrate, Liu Nengchao, which was very different from Dong’s hardline politics. Liu Nengchao’s greatest success in building efficient county administration did not come from administrative rationalization, but from a sophisticated comprehension of humanistic factors. His clever wartime fiscal management and his savvy mobilization of the gentry both resorted to human resources, and defied any objective analysis. As I will demonstrate in the final part of this chapter, Liu Nengchao’s, and, to a lesser extent, Dong Zhongsheng’s administrative approaches cannot be fully understood unless we take

the humanistic core of their governance seriously. This humanistic core provided not only the tools for effective administration, but also goals that could turn a scientifically ungovernable reality into a social entity that was far more responsive to the calls of the government.

The military conflict between Japanese and local Chinese troops that broke out just outside of present day Beijing in July 1937 soon escalated into a full scale war. In order to force the Chinese government to succumb to its demands, the Japanese army decided to invade Shanghai, and thus threaten the core economic base of the Nationalist government in Jiangnan. The Nationalist government sent its best troops to this area to stop the enemy. After three months of heroic resistance, the Chinese army, which had almost exhausted all its modernized units, was eventually outflanked by the Japanese army and fell into a chaotic and disastrous full retreat. By the end of 1937, the entire Jiangnan area, besides the international settlements of Shanghai, had fallen under Japanese occupation. So too had the northern and northeastern parts of Zhejiang province, which were customarily called West Zhejiang (*Zhexi* 浙西). While the most economically developed zones in West Zhejiang, including the provincial capital Hangzhou and the lowland rice bowl counties, had been lost to the enemy, the highland counties around Mt Tianmu (*Tianmu shan* 天目山) in the western and southwestern parts of West Zhejiang had not been occupied. After passing through an initial stage of panic in the face of this fiasco, the Chinese authorities began to revive their administrative control in Mt Tianmu and other nearby regions in early 1938. By the end of that year, with the main battlefield having moved further westward into Central China, the Japanese troops left in Jiangnan opted to shrink their battle lines and to consolidate the existing occupation zones. The Nationalists' Zhejiang provincial government could thus push its jurisdiction further out towards the fringes of the plain counties. A special frontline administrative zone, which encompassed approximately 11500 km²,

contained 15 counties around Mt. Tianmu and roughly 1.25 million people, was formed in the area directly adjacent to the Japanese-occupied parts of Jiangnan. This proximity to Jiangnan gave the special administrative zone, formally named as the Acting Office of Zhejiang Provincial Government in West Zhejiang (*Zhejiang sheng zheng fu Zhexi xing shu* 浙江省政府浙西行署, hereafter the Acting Office) in December 1938, a position of great strategic significance for the Nationalist government.²²⁸ It became the most important bridgehead for any military or political action that aimed to attack or even recover Jiangnan, where the Japanese occupation army and Chinese collaborative regime were gathering the resources to continue their invasion. It was also an invaluable defensive screen for protecting the rest of Zhejiang, and parts of Jiangxi and Anhui. The Japanese army also knew the strategic value of the Mt Tianmu area. From 1940 onward, it launched several military raids to weaken the Nationalist political influence.²²⁹ Meanwhile, the Japanese occupation authorities also conducted economic attacks on the Mt Tianmu area, in order to fundamentally demolish the fiscal foundation of the Chinese frontline regimes. For this reason, Mt Tianmu area was also the most important economic frontline that the Nationalists had to hold if they were to stop, or at least frustrate, the Japanese economic invasion.

However, the strategic importance of Mt Tianmu area made it a high risk and difficult place for the people who had to work there. Not everybody had the ability or the willingness to serve the county under the direct military threat of the enemy. Against this background, it seems only natural that young Central Politics School officials who had already completed their internships

²²⁸ Zhejiang Provincial Archives (Hereafter ZPA) L029-001-0990 “Zhejiang sheng er shi jiu nian du bao gao ji sheng er qu xing shu fa wen-cong jiao tu shang jian li qi lai de tian bei xin bao lei” (The 1940 Report of Zhejiang Province and the Proclamation of the Second Circuit-the New Tianbei Outpost Built up from the Scorched Earth), 78-84. Nominally, the entire Western Zhejiang was under the command of the Acting Office. In reality, the office could only directly control the 15 counties near Mt Tianmu while basically letting local guerrilla forces to develop their own regimes in the seven lowland counties which were occupied by the Japanese army.

²²⁹ ZPA L029-001-0990 “Zhejiang sheng er shi jiu nian du bao gao ji sheng er qu xing shu fa wen-cong jiao tu shang jian li qi lai de tian bei xin bao lei,” 89.

and who had worked in the several counties around Mt Tianmu area before the war took the major positions under the Acting Office. It seemed no accident that the chief executive officer of the Acting Office was He Yangling, who had been an instructor at the school and had previously worked with a lot of Central Politics graduates, like Liu Nengchao in Shaoxing, near the area. Certainly, on the surface, the concentration of Central Politics School personnel in the Acting Office simply reflected the continuous influence of the School in Zhejiang. He Yangling's major deputy in the Acting Office was Lin Shuyi (林樹藝), and he was responsible for the actual operation and policy making. Lin Shuyi had graduated from the Politics School, and had been a major participant in the establishment and operation of Lanxi Experimental County. The censor of the First Administrative and Inspectional Circuit, which had once governed the entire Mt Tianmu area, was Wang Hao (汪浩), a research fellow in the College of Land Economy at the Politics School and the county magistrate of Pinghu Land Administration Experimental County. In addition, there were no fewer than twenty Politics School graduates who after 1939 served as county magistrates or supervisors of major administrative units in the jurisdiction of the Acting Office.²³⁰ They brought even more classmates to work in other minor positions. In this sense, it is not improper to say that Mt Tianmu was another experimental base run by the Politics School.

Despite the fact that the Central Politics School officials had already occupied major positions in the area before the war, the personnel arrangement of Acting Office was not as natural and reasonable as it seemed. The real reason for a Politics School leadership in the West Zhejiang actually had nothing to do with prewar administrative or professional continuity. On the contrary, it came about in large part simply because the frontline was so dangerous that the

²³⁰ ZPA L029-001-0862 “Zhaxi san shi yi nian dui di tong ji ti yao” (The 1942 Western Zhejiang Statistic Abstract regarding the Enemy), 14. L032-000-1994 “Guomindang zhong yang zheng zhi xue xiao tong xue hui zai Zhejiang gong zuo hui yuan min ce” (The Namelist of Association Members of Nationalist Central Politics School Alumni Working in Zhejiang).

authorities could not find enough volunteers.²³¹ As mentioned in the previous chapter, Huang Shaohong, who had accidentally taken the chairmanship of Zhejiang province for the second time after the outbreak of war, did not belong to any major cliques in the Nationalist party and therefore had no connection to big brokers who controlled both the political and human resources. Under the circumstances, upon returning to Zhejiang, Huang Shaohong could only rely on a few confidants, such as He Yangling, to take up key positions. Similarly, the only people He Yangling trusted were the young Politics School officials whose political capital was so weak that they had few choices but to follow their old supervisors. Therefore, the high concentration of modern administrators at the key strategic zone originated from a highly contingent set of factors. Outside of his small patron network, Huang Shaohong found it hard to mobilize people to undesirable positions on the frontline. In consequence, contrary to most modern imaginations, the young Politics School officials took charge of strategic positions mainly because they were not politically, or perhaps administratively, competent enough to compete for the safer and more comfortable jobs.

The Japanese also played a role in consolidating the leadership of the Politics School officials. The Japanese army crossed the Qiantang River (*Qiantang jiang* 錢塘江) and took Shaoxing in East Zhejiang in 1940. This action further isolated the Mt Tianmu area by cutting off its transportation connections with East Zhejiang. In many ways, the Acting Office thus became an independent kingdom, because the Zhejiang provincial government, located in the deep south of the province, had no effective means of actually commanding this administrative zone. During this time, the standard of living at the Acting Office rapidly deteriorated in the face of the war and enemy's economic embargo. Given all these factors, Central Politics School

²³¹ ZPA L029-001-0843 “Zhaxi dang qian zhon yao wen ti” (The Current Important Issues in West Zhejiang). 8.

officials became virtually irreplaceable, since the authorities had neither the access nor any candidates to supplant them.²³²

Notwithstanding these unpleasent realpolitik roots, these unprepared young Central Politics School officials stood firm in the face of these formidable challenges all the way up to the end of war in 1945. During this six-year long period, West Zhejiang, and especially the part of the Mt Tianmu area under the command of the Acting Office, was developed by these young officials into a veritable outpost. Despite the constant military and economic attacks from the Japanese, this outpost remained firmly in the hands of the Central Politics School officials (in fact, they further enlarged the area under their control), who proved themselves to be indomitable county magistrates, guerrilla organizers, and wartime financiers. Their methods might have been imperfect, and sometimes even controversial from the perspective of a public administration that pursued the scientization and institutionalization administrative processes. However, they withstood the war, and established a sustainable administrative system under huge pressures from both the enemy and their own government. How did they achieve this? What role did their public administration education play in the building of this wartime polity?

Because many counties in West Zhejiang and Mt Tianmu area were simultaneously occupied by both the Nationalist and Japanese, the Nationalist rule there tended to be very expedient, military-oriented, and improvisational. To capture the main administrative characteristics of Central Politics School officials, this chapter will only deal with two relatively stable but widely recognized model counties, Changhua (昌化) and Xiaofeng (孝豐), both of which were located in the westernmost part of the Mt Tianmu area.

²³² ZPA L033-001-0627 “Changhua jing ji, Tianbei zheng zhi de shi ping pan, xue shu de dan sheng, Tianbei min zhong kang zhang shi lue” (Changhua Economy, The Critique of Political Gain and Loss in Tianbei, The Birth of Scholarship, The Brief Record of Tianbei People’s Resistance against Japan), 302.

These two counties shared many similar conditions that make a comparison of their administrative approaches meaningful. To begin with, both of them were small mountain counties with similar geographical and demographic characteristics. According to the 1942 data, Changhua had about 81,588 people living on its 1352.65 km² territory while the area and population of Xiaofeng was 1141 km² and 95,877 respectively.²³³ Secondly, both counties were on the margin of the Jiangnan economic circle and therefore had similar, though not identical, economies: producing and exporting raw mountain materials for the Jiangnan market. The most important thing, however, is that they were both administered by young Politics School graduates for five years during roughly the same period of the war. Accordingly, the two Politics School magistrates consciously emulated each other's useful administrative innovations. Despite their similarities, the two counties still had their own distinctive administrative approaches and problems, and thus provide a perfect case study into the factors that simultaneously shaped "heterodox" political discourses and resisted the more orthodox forms of public administration that were supposedly rooted in science.

Section One: An Unexpected Breakthrough: The Youth-Save-Nation Narrative

In the early spring of 1938, the newly-appointed magistrate of Changhua county, the 26 year old Dong Zhongsheng (董中生), visited Lanxi county on his way to take office. He was invited to an unusual interview meeting held by seven Central Politics School graduates, who just happened to be staying at the Politics School's experimental base in Lanxi after their attempts to return to home in North or Northeast China to fight the Japanese occupation had

²³³ ZPA L029-001-0862 "Zhaxi san shi yi nian dui di tong ji ti yao," 31-32. ZPA L033-001-0627 "Changhua jing ji, Tianbei zheng zhi de shi ping pan, xue shu de dan sheng, Tianbei min zhong kang zhang shi lue," 31. Wang Wei ed., *Xiaofeng zhi gao (The Draft Gazetteer of XiaoFeng)* (Taipei: Minglun Bookstore, 1974), 29.

failed. These interviewers were all in their twenties, and they welcomed Dong with the straightforward attitude of young men. They asked Dong “What are you going to do after you take office?” almost the moment they met him. Dong Zhongsheng answered quickly and honestly: “I have no idea, because my undergraduate major was civil engineering, and my graduate one was in land measurement. But I will learn and do my best.” This answer was probably to the tastes of these young interviewers who were only too eager to find any opportunity to contribute to the nation. It is quite possible that the young Politics School graduates were just as inexperienced with the reality of county administration as the man they interviewed. The interviewees immediately, and unanimously, expressed a strong desire to work with Dong Zhongsheng. In this dramatic manner, the initial staff of the wartime Changhua county administration was formed.

This new team did not waste any time, and set off from Lanxi to Changhua the very next day. It was not an easy trip. Changhua was a small mountainous county in the northwestern corner of West Zhejiang, a remote place that had no direct railroad or waterway connections with Lanxi in East Zhejiang after Hangzhou, the major hub of transportation, had been captured by the Japanese. Nevertheless, the poor state of wartime transportation could not stop these patriotic crusaders from approaching Changhua. Nor could the lack of information extinguish the passion of these county administration greenhorns. Despite the fact that they had little, if any, background information about the county, they still felt ambitious about the future. During their trip, they had even considered the possibility of organizing guerilla warfare units throughout the county, in case the enemy should invade Changhua within the next three months.

In spite of this high morale, Dong Zhongsheng and his crew could not help but feel shocked and disappointed when they eventually arrived in Changhua on March 1st, 1938. They were

welcomed by a dozen remnant county policemen, whose posteriors were literally exposed by their ragged uniforms. To make matters worse, there was no county government office. There had not been a formal county hall since the Taiping Rebellion in the late 1850s. After the destruction of that war, the county government only existed in a few small, dark rooms that they rented from civilian residents. Even this modest physical existence ceased to exist in 1935, when a small detachment of the Chinese communist army, fleeing a siege circle by the central government, destroyed it. Just over two years after the government had recovered the county from its short communist occupation, but the military fiasco in late 1937 once again let the county fall into a state of semi-anarchy. As a result, when Dong Zhongsheng finally arrived with his crew of county government back, he literally had no “office” to take, nor a government to run that bore mention. Furthermore, the last administrative retreat had not left a single coin in the county’s vault. There could be no administrative progress unless he found money to feed and accommodate himself and his crew.²³⁴

According to a short memoir written by Dong Zhongsheng in 1939, these initial difficulties of daily life, though very annoying, were soon overcome by the efforts of his new county staff. Within twenty days, Dong Zhongsheng and his team had not only had solved the basic problems of living, but had also rebuilt the county government from the ground up. A Central Politics School graduate from department of finance recompiled the tax data. Meanwhile, because of the efforts of other Central Politics School administrators, all households and able-bodied men were registered, organized, and a basic self-defense force was established. In other words, Dong Zhongsheng was able to create an administrative stronghold within a very short time, under the

²³⁴ Dong Zhongsheng, “Kang zhang qian xian xian zheng hui yi” (The Memoir of County Administration in the Frontline of War of Resistance against Japan), *Dong fang zha zhi* 11:i6 (1977), 56-57.

pressures of enemy threat and in a place where the authority of the Chinese government had been in a severely weakened state for more than three quarters of a century.

Dong Zhongsheng, adhering to the traditional virtue of modesty, attributed this remarkable achievement all to his young, energetic, and competent Central Politics School crew, praising their abilities and spirit of self-sacrifice. Ever since they arrived, these Politics School administrators spontaneously took over the most basic grass-root jobs, serving as low-ranking officials at sub-county districts and in other positions that were badly paid but important. They worked hard, and were not afraid of challenging the local bullies who did have a few Central Politics School officials beaten up.²³⁵ Allegedly, because of their indifference to personal interest, the county government soon won the support of Changhua people. Consequently, Dong Zhongsheng's administration was able to mobilize more than 200,000 people to turn a wide and modern national highway into a narrow rural defile, just two weeks after he had received the order to destroy traffic routes in order to slow down the enemy.²³⁶ Essentially, the story told by Dong Zhongsheng seems to be a typical case that fits with a mainstream political narrative: honest youth with high ideals, professional abilities, and rational projects saved the nation. By this narrative, the outbreak of the war had little effect on Dong's administrative measures, which in large part were no different from the prewar agenda in Jiangning and Lanxi.

Indeed, the compilation of tax data, the registration of household and able-bodied men, and the organization of the self-defense force were all major tasks that had been promoted by many Central Politics School administrators in Lanxi and, to a lesser degree, in Jiangning and other counties. As explicated in the previous chapter, all these jobs could not be done without a sufficient input of time, fiscal, and human resources. In view of this, one does not need to be

²³⁵ Dong Zhongsheng, "Wu nian de gong zuo gan bu he gong zuo jie duan" (The Cadres and Working Stages in the Last Five Years), *Fuwu* 7:11/12 (1943), 9.

²³⁶ Dong Zhongsheng, "Wo ru he zuo xian zhang" (How I Did as a County Magistrate), *Fuwu* i5 (1939), 39-43.

skeptical of romantic heroism to question how Dong Zhongsheng and his team of administrative layman could be so successful in such a short period.

According to the archival sources, by 1939, the second year of his term, Dong Zhongsheng had reported to the provincial government all the successes mentioned in his memoir article, which was published at the same time in the monthly *Service*. This magazine was issued during the war by the Central Politics School, and was intended to be a forum where the school's graduates working in various administrative positions could share their first hand experiences with the current students. Given the timing, it seems unlikely that Dong Zhongsheng simply coined the whole heroic story and presented it to his supervisors and the Central Politics School students simultaneously. Nevertheless, almost all the available materials related to Dong Zhongsheng and his Changhua county were generated well after 1939. In other words, there are no archives that date back to the first year of Dong's term that can be used to substantiate Dong's later memoir articles. The absence of pre-1939 materials may not be a coincidence. In fact, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that Dong had sent few, if any, reports to the provincial government through 1938. At this time, the whole of West Zhejiang was unstable due to the threat of enemy invasion, and the Acting Office, which took charge of the West Zhejiang frontline area, was not established until the end of 1938. Under the circumstances, while it would be reasonable to doubt whether the early work of Changhua county government was actually as systematic and successful as Dong Zhongsheng claimed, the best we can do is to compare and utilize the available materials and approximate what led Dong to take the actions that he did, both in terms of real administration and in the propagated narratives. Although the materials available may not be enough to support a detailed study, it is still possible to discover what the

contemporary administrators and Central Politics School students who read Dong's story considered necessary, proper, and acceptable.

This line of thinking necessitates that we reexamine the youth-save-nation narrative, which provided the thematic basis of Dong Zhongsheng's story. It would seem that he was fully aware of his audience, who would appreciate and be convinced by this kind of youth dynamism. Most of Dong Zhongsheng's surviving works were published in the monthly *Service*. The readers of *Service* were the youth who had received a techno-scientific undergraduate education of public administration based on a specific kind of scientific rationality, which was supposed to be independent from age, culture, and experience. Once this unique form rationality was widely acknowledged, it would be taken for granted that young men were as rational, and therefore as capable political and administrative agents, as elder people whose experience and other social capitals were no longer as indispensable for good governance. The enthusiasm of youth was valued, because it could activate reforms that had become bogged down by the decay of physical/intellectual energy of the older generations. For our purposes, the crux is not whether Dong Zhongsheng told the truth or not. It is the facets of reality that could be neglected, or even excluded, by the youth-save-nation narrative that matters more to us. By highlighting the incredible energy and creativity of youth, Dong Zhongsheng attempted to draw his readers' attention to a few dimensions of administration. These dimensions held the capacity to solve some deep-seated problems once for all, as long as rational measures were found and enforced. For example, mobilizing people to sabotage a highway was indeed a task that could be done through the strong initiative and good understanding of a few young officials. But, while the determination of Dong's crew, coupled with the fear of the Japanese military, could push people to follow the government's call on one-off occasions, such as collective traffic sabotage, other

administrative problems like retrieving tax data and household registration could not be solved through the passionate momentum launched by a few capable young bureaucrats.

On these more routine issues, Dong Zhongsheng did mention some tips for implementation. For example, Dong described how he acquired an accurate household and able-bodied men registration two weeks after he took the office. He summoned all his Politics School personnel, in addition to nearly 250 primary school students and graduates, to launch simultaneous “sudden attacks (*tuji* 突擊)” on the people who were trapped in their hamlets by the big snows of early spring.²³⁷ Leaving aside the issue of whether or not Dong had the ability or the techniques to mobilize so many people capable of performing such a highly synergetic and skilled operation, Changhua was a little larger than Los Angeles, and its terrain significantly harder. Visiting all the communities scattered through these big mountains on heavy snow days and on foot was clearly a mission that was too impractical to be precisely enforced. Moreover, the data of household and able-bodied men could, at best, only provide Dong Zhongsheng with a rough idea of the pool of human resources. They would be useless unless Dong Zhongsheng also constructed a reliable household data management system that could regularly trace and update the latest population movements. Establishing an effective and functioning administration, however banal, could not be done by the super agency of youth alone.

It was most likely that because of this reason that Dong Zhongsheng, when highlighting the power of modern youth, also referred to the motto of Song Neo-Confucian scholar Chen Hao (1032-1085 AD): “To have the Land under Heaven well ordered and the customs righteously

²³⁷ Dong Zhongsheng, “Ru he tiao zhen xian yi xia de xing zheng ji guo” (How to Adjust Sub-county Administrative Institutes), *Dong Zhongsheng xian sheng quan ji zhong zhang shi xian zheng (The Complete Collection of Dong Zhongsheng Part Two Wartime County Administration)* (Taipei: printed by the author, 1999), 77. From Dong’s narratives, the age of these primary school graduates and students were apparently youngsters who were much older than twelve or thirteen year old children that are expected to be the proper age group in Western elementary schools. This phenomenon of “very old” primary students was quite common during the Republican era when compulsory elementary education had not yet established.

corrected, winning [the support of] virtuous people is crucial.”²³⁸ He held countywide tests and training schemes in order to enlist the educated rural youth into grass roots administrative positions, even though he actually had serious doubts about the ability of these youth.²³⁹ The fact that Dong mobilized primary school students, rather than the standing rural clerks, is evidence of the necessity he felt to re-staff the rural administrative apparatus with more reliable and capable personnel. Dong Zhongsheng’s calculations were quite understandable. Even though he had an extraordinary staff formed almost entirely of college graduates, the county government could not count on them to enforce all routine tasks. Nor could he rely on “sudden strikes” ad infinitum to complete his missions. Fortunately for Dong Zhongsheng, the panic of war paved the way for his administrative innovations. The war had frightened off a lot of the more inept incumbents at the bottom of the existing administrative structure, and at the same time brought more qualified candidates to the rural area; those who were deprived of opportunities in the occupied urban zones and willing to do the underpaid grass root jobs. The war rendered such badly-paid rural administrative positions more desirable than ever for the small literati whose minor educational backgrounds might not be respected in cities, but remained valuable in the context of functionary countryside jobs. At any rate, recruiting rural youth into more standardized and institutionalized grassroot administrative units no doubt made Dong Zhongsheng’s story, both discursively and practically, more convincing in the eyes of Central Politics School readers.

Interestingly, after Dong Zhongsheng recruited his set of rural educated youth in July 1938, no more administrative innovations and measures were recorded in either archival or memoir sources until March 1939. In other words, after the alleged heroics of March 1938, for almost a

²³⁸ Dong Zhongsheng, “Ru he tiao zhen xian yi xia de xing zheng ji guo,” 74.

²³⁹ ZPA L029-001-0933 ”Changhua, Jiande, Kaihua, Fuyang xian zheng fu er shi ba nian du gong zuo bao gao” (The 1939 Working Reports of Changhua, Jiande, Kaihua, and Fuyang county governments), 6. Dong Zhongsheng, “Kang zhang qian xian xian zheng hui yi,” 57.

year thereafter Dong's Changhua county government completed nothing worth reporting, even from Dong Zhongsheng's own perspective. As such, it is very hard to judge whether these rural educated youth actually helped the county government establish a well functioning administration after they had become local functionaries. To the contrary, other archival materials indicate that the quality of grassroot governmental workers in Changhua ranked among the lowest in the entire Mt. Tianmu area. For example, a few employees who worked for the newly re-established county government were caught gambling during office hours.²⁴⁰ In April 1939, an inspection team even accused Dong's county government staff to be entirely incompetent. One can infer from this that the authorities were not at all satisfied with what Dong had achieved during his first year as a magistrate. In this regard, the recruitment of rural educated youth does not appear to have been an innovative step launched by calculating rational administrators, but rather a hasty and awkward measure largely generated by the youth-save-nation narrative. Seen from this perspective, it may not be unreasonable to presume that Dong Zhongsheng did not make much administrative progress during 1938 and early 1939. At the very least, we can infer that his story of well-trained young officials implementing rational public administration was not a very accurate representation of the performance of Dong Zhongsheng and his crew before 1939.²⁴¹

One can imagine how uneasy Dong, only a young magistrate, felt when he learnt of the scathing comments handed out by the authorities. Accusing Dong of tendentiousness and nepotism, these inspection reports actually denied that the Politics School graduates were

²⁴⁰ ZPA L029-001-0985 "Zhexi xing shu Tiannan shi cha zu guan yu xun shi zhang dou zhong de "Tiannan" bao gao (The Inspectional Report of West Zhejiang Acting Office Tiannan Inspection Team about the "Tiannan" in Fighting), 25, 44.

²⁴¹ According to the testimony of a youth cadre who worked in Changhua from April 1st to June 15th 1939, there seemed little administrative improvement in the county before 1939. Dong Xi, "Zai dong xian qian shao, Changhua sheng qing gong tuan gong zuo bao dao" (On the Eastern Frontline, Changhua The Working Report of Provincial Youth Working Group) *Shengli (Victory)* 39 (1939), 12, 16.

capable administrators.²⁴² To make it worse, Dong Zhongsheng learnt from a few other sources that the outspoken critique of the inspectors was not only the result of their own objective evaluations, but had also been formed by the backlash triggered by the radical and idealistic working style of his Central Politics School crew. Firmly believing in the correct goodwill of their administrative endeavors, these fresh graduates tended to see any compromise with social reality, habits, or even conventional wisdom as cowardice and corruption. This “hardline politics,” as Dong named it, soon incurred huge social disaffection.²⁴³ Only a few months after the Politics School administrators arrived Changhua, local gentry and strongmen began to organize large-scale impeachments against the county magistrate and government. Some of these protest mobilizations were so thorough that the leaders from all of the townships, villages, and hamlets in Changhua sent collective petition letters to the provincial government, asking for the removal of Dong and his team. By the early spring of 1939, the Changhua county government was being held at bay.

Unexpectedly, it was in the context of this backlash against rational youth administration that new and more successful administrative innovations were shaped and implemented. The first material I could find that shows a sign of break with the previous administrative stagnation is a plan that dates from late 1939. This plan proposed the organizing of a militia force, armed mainly with local firearms, and the enlargement of the women’s training program that had been inaugurated in March 1939. The plan emphasized the initial popularity of women’s training among previous female trainees. For a county that was very exposed to the enemy threat,

²⁴² The inspectors sent by the central government found Dong “working hard” but his crew “inexperienced and incompetent.” ZPA L033-001-0637 “Zhejiang zheng qing bao gao” (The Report of Political Situation in Zhejiang), 25. ZPA L029-001-0985 “Zhexi xing shu Tiannan shi cha zu guan yu xun shi zhang dou zhong de “Tiannan” bao gao,” 22.

²⁴³ Dong Zhongsheng, “Gong xing zheng zhi de yi yi he yun yong” (The Meaning and Application of Hardline Politics), *Dong Zhongsheng xian sheng quan ji zhong zhang shi xian zheng*, 42.

establishing some basic forces of self-defense was quite understandable. However, training women seemed to be less of a necessity. There was no strong tradition of Han Chinese women participating in public and governmental affairs, and thus the launch of such a campaign by this county administration is definitely an action worth analyzing.

The ideal of training women did not simply occur to Dong and his crew overnight. As a matter of fact, the reason Dong Zhongsheng found it administratively desirable to train women right at the juncture of his political stalemate owed to Changhua County's unusual social situation and a series of coincidences.

Changhua was not too far away from the core area of Jiangnan, China's most advanced area in terms of economy and culture and a place where the cult of female chastity remained (at least nominally, perhaps actually) part of the moral orthodoxy of "Chinese culture" through into the early 20th century. Changhua, however, had long been famous for its custom of female promiscuity. As one female travelogue writer witnessed, with a kind of feminist appreciation, in Changhua in the early 1940s, "it is not unusual for a Changhua woman to have one or two "wild husbands"(*ye zhang fu* 野丈夫, extramarital sex partner) in addition to her legal spouse."²⁴⁴

Another testimony made by a social investigator in 1941 also confirmed that the local women had open attitudes towards extra-marital sex. The investigator describes how gambling was a popular entertainment among both men and women, who mixed together during the games, and how unscrupulous women were when it came to using their bodies to pay off gambling debts. To explain why Changhua women were not like other Han Chinese women, who were conventionally considered to be very sexually conservative, the investigator invoked the poor economy and the shortage of labor force in the mountain area. Both elements, the investigator

²⁴⁴ Peilian, "Wan shan cong zhong de Changhua fu nu" (Changhua Women amidst Numerous Mountains), *Nusheng (The Female Voice)* 1:12 (1943), 14.

speculated, made the contribution of women's labor more indispensable, and this had led to weaker patriarchic authority and stronger female autonomy.²⁴⁵

Like most people, Dong Zhongsheng did not realize the potential connection between this social custom and his own administrative endeavors when he arrived in the county. But for the administrative predicament afflicting him, Dong Zhongsheng might have never been bothered to deal with what he viewed as “the evil custom.” However, on hearing that Huang Shaohong, the chairman of Zhejiang province and the leader of the patron network to which Dong Zhongsheng belonged, would inspect the West Zhejiang frontline in the spring of 1939, an anxious Dong Zhongsheng no doubt felt obliged to show some progress to the highest leader of Zhejiang.²⁴⁶ Inspired by the impending visit, banning gambling and promiscuity (at least during the period of inspection) became a goal of his troubled county government. For this reason, even though Dong admitted in his later article that these policies were entirely devoid of emergency, he decided to implement them. Dong was not entirely ignorant of local women's customary open attitudes towards extramarital sex. Nonetheless, he still took it for granted that without gambling debts, women in Changhua would not be “forced” to engage in such activities. Dong also expected that when this policy was enforced, local women and their families would no longer need to rely on local litigation brokers to file the countless lawsuits against debt disputes and sex scandals, which beset so many local officials in the area.²⁴⁷ So long as gambling and “immoral sex” could be curbed during the chairman's stay in Changhua, Dong Zhongsheng would have an easy way

²⁴⁵ ZPA L033-001-0627 “Changhua jing ji, Tianbei zheng zhi de shi ping pan, xue shu de dan sheng, Tianbei min zhong kang zhang shi lue,” 43.

²⁴⁶ The Office of Culture and History, “Kang ri zhan zheng shi qi Linan da shi ji” (Major Events in Linan during the War of Resistance against Japan), *Linan wen shi zi liao (Literary and Historical Materials of Linan)* 2 (1990), 189.

²⁴⁷ Mao Shen, “Wang shi hui yi-Mao Shen hui yi lu (si)” (Recalling the Past-the Memoir of Mao shen 4), *Zhuan ji wen xue (Biographies)* 75:5, (1999), 121. Dong Zhongsheng, “Ru he jin du (How to Ban Gambling),” *Dong Zhongsheng xian sheng quan ji zhong zhang shi xian zheng*, 307.

to demonstrate his determination and capability before his supervisors. Unfortunately for Dong, the local population did not buy into Dong's wishful thinking that, in retrospect, was simply based on superficial observations very common among modern intellectuals from urbanized areas. Not much time passed before the ban encountered troubles. On 27 March 1939, Dong's government heard that people had celebrated a wedding feast with open gambling and drama performances, as per the customs of the western district of the county, Dong immediately sent his self-defense force to the venue. The moment the force stormed the feast, the situation almost instantly spiraled out of control. Government agents and soldiers of self-defense force were beaten and disarmed by the outraged masses. Astonished by this incident, Dong Zhongsheng rushed to the scene with another self-defense squad. Under his orders, the masses released the captured government agents and returned some of the guns they took from the self-defense force. This temporary show of obedience apparently caused Dong to overestimate his authority. To save face in front of the masses, and to find somebody to investigate, he made a very unwise decision: he ordered the arrest of the actors who had performed during the gambling feast. After he thought the crisis had been settled and he had left the place, the self-defense force escorting the actors back to the county government were once again surrounded by the angry crowd. To avoid being disarmed again, this time the soldiers fired. In the fierce gunfight between the governmental personnel and indignant masses, a stray bullet killed the bride, and another woman and a child were badly injured. As the result, right after Huang Shaohong had inspected Changhua on 25 March, Dong Zhongsheng's political performance turned from sour to disastrous.²⁴⁸ Changhua party leaders, the gentry and the local elite caught up with Huang Shaohong just after he had left Changhua for Anhui, requesting that he replace the clumsy

²⁴⁸ Dong Zhongsheng, "Ru he jin du," 312.

magistrate Dong Zhongsheng.²⁴⁹ Although Huang Shaohong eventually decided to protect Dong and ignore all of the complaints, the young magistrate must have been given a very hard time.

It was only after this unexpected crisis - which almost turned into a large scale riot - that Dong sensed that the sudden escalation of resistance against government interference might have been caused by his own misunderstandings of social reality in Changhua. However, this was also the time that Dong and his Politics School colleagues received the cue to assess whether their thwarted efforts to implement effective administrative control could have something to do with the “promiscuous” women.

Dong later skillfully deemphasized in his memoir article the invaluable lessons of the gambling crisis had in regards to his following administrative innovations. He only stated that after encountering numerous frustrations in his early attempts to implement governmental orders, he finally discovered the crux of problem. The reason that the people in Changhua did not follow government orders and policies was because the objects of government dealings were not right. Rational men were supposed to be the main targets of instruction. However, through the process of enforcement, officials found that Changhua men rarely gave the rational responses. Instead, they tended to ask their “big nannies”(lao niang 老娘), the customary nickname that local men called their wives.²⁵⁰ Dong and his crew gradually realized that the origins of Changhua’s unique customs, and thus the root of promoting effective administration, lay with these “big nannies.”

Due to an enduring lack of labor force in the mountain area, Changhua had long developed a social practice to optimize the use of every single person. To (at least partially) recover the labour valuable of their wives from baby-carers and chores, many Changhua families tended to

²⁴⁹ Dong Zhongsheng, “Huang Shaohong san ren sheng zhu xi” (The Three Term Chairman of Province Huang Shaohong), *Qi sheng zhu xi mu zhong ji (Working in the Staff for Chairmans of Seven Provinces)* (Taipei: printed by the author, 1999), 48-51.

²⁵⁰ Dong Zhongsheng, “Wo men ru he zu xun fu nu” (How We Organized and Trained Women), *Fuwu* 6:8 (1942), 6.

adopt little girls, usually under the age of nine, to be babysitters and future spouses to the infant boys of the household. This special marriage/labor adoption, on the one hand, allowed more adult women to devote themselves to economic activities in the mountain, namely walnut collecting and silkworm rearing. On the other, since a significant proportion of Changhua men were actually brought up by their mother-like wives, who were often more than five years older than their husbands, it was natural that these women, who had long taken charge of all aspects of their spouses' lives, had a much larger say in family management.²⁵¹

Once they realized this, Dong Zhongsheng's unseasoned team revealed both its strength and its weakness. Its strengths came less from its inexorable insistence on principles, than in its team members' fast expediency of accepting the reality and forming new tactics accordingly. Once the influence of women in Changhua was identified, Dong Zhongsheng and his young crew had little difficulty jumping to the conclusion that women could be an effective conduit for the county government to carry out its executive will all the way down to the grass-roots level. Though it was logically consistent, this speculation also exposed the unsophisticated nature of Dong and his crew. Mobilizing women had been an intermittent issue through modern China's political history. Theoretically, the active participation of women was indispensable for the building of a sound Chinese modern nation state. However, in most cases, women had at best played a limited and secondary role in politics, and only during a few moments of revolutionary climax during the 20th century. In everyday life, the ingrained patriarchy effectively kept females out of politics. As a result, shrewd local officials, who knew the vital importance of ensuring the cooperation of the indigenous male elite, rarely saw "awakening" women's political awareness

²⁵¹ Dong Zhongsheng, "Wo men ru he zu xun fu nu," 6. About the practice of adopting prospective bribe, see Arthur Wolf and Chieh-shan Huang, *Marriage and Adoption in China, 1845-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980). According to Wolf and Huang's research, such a marital practice was often accompanied with the high rate of extra marital affair of child bribe. This discovery also explains the cultural rather than economic origin of promiscuity observed by contemporaries in Changhua.

as a sensible way of promoting administration. Though it risked jeopardizing the stability of male domination, Dong Zhongsheng's county government was too naïve and eager to resist the risky benefits of women's training.

After the embarrassing failure in March, Dong Zhongsheng decided to return to his original short-term plan of female training. He took what had initially been intended as a show, held a week before Huang Shaohong's visit, into a real mobilizing project.²⁵² However, the hindrance of a patriarchic society was only a partial reason that made training women infeasible. Women's training, unlike other forms of political mobilization, needed special personnel, or more specifically female cadres, who were the only social group deemed acceptable to the trainees and their families who had a deep distrust of the gender emancipating discourse that emanated from the modern state. Unfortunately for most political activists, female cadres were an unaffordable luxury. The single most insurmountable barrier before Dong's plan was a lack of reliable female trainers. Dong soon realized that because his own male political workers knew nothing but lecturing, it would be unrealistic to expect any progress in the women's training.²⁵³

The salvation to Dong Zhongsheng's premature plan eventually came at the end of 1939, and originated from another equally hasty policy made by He Yangling in early 1938. Before he took the Acting Office in West Zhejiang, He Yangling had established a few institutes in his jurisdiction of Shaoxing to accommodate the young refugee students who were fleeing from the

²⁵² Of course, Dong would deny that his initial woman training was prepared for his supervisors. However, according to Dong's own claim, the last woman training was held during October 1938. Another source authenticates that there was indeed one in 1938 held by 9 female student cadres and last only for two weeks. Since then, Dong actually did nothing to promote any project involving woman mobilization. In other words, after the symbolic training in late 1938, the county had no woman training for five months until Huang Shaohong was about to visit Changhua. Dong Zhongsheng, "Wo men ru he zu xun fu nu," 8. Zhejiang sheng di san liu dong shi jiao tuan (The Third Mobile Teaching Group of Zhejiang Province), "Changhua xian Heqiao zhen fu nu ban xun lian shi shi jing guo" (The Implement Process of Woman Training in Heqiao Township, Changhua County), *Jinxu (Further Learning 5 (1939), 25.*

²⁵³ Dong Zhongsheng, "Wo men ru he zu xun fu nu," 6-7.

Japanese occupied areas. He Yangling's original aim was probably to take care of these refugee students and, if possible, help them continue their studies. He also saw the potential in mobilizing young students for the wartime administration.²⁵⁴ This well-intentioned policy, however, soon turned sour. The government did not have enough resources to help hundreds of students live and study. Moreover, although He Yangling did organize institutes to train students in the hope of turning them into frontline cadres, both the authorities and students soon realized that the frontlines could actually not absorb that many shortly-trained cadres, whose abilities had little practical use to real wartime missions. Once patriotic passion came to terms with the disappointment of the reality, radical thoughts quickly gained an audience among those students who were already indignant at the government's "unwillingness" to see their value. Ironically, in order to defuse the explosive energy of the young refugee students, and thus prevent the spread of communist radical influence, the government was forced to find (or more precisely, to create) actual tasks for the frontline cadres. By the end of 1939, when He Yangling was appointed the top official of the whole West Zhejiang, the youth organizations he had brought to Mt. Tianmu had become dangerous political combustibles rather than applicable assets. It was against this background that He Yangling let his wife and another woman, both graduates of the Nationalist Party Affair School, lead a cadre squad formed entirely by female refugee students. Even so, the new female cadre squad still had to find new tasks as soon as possible. This big but underprepared plan of women's training provided a timely stage for desperate female cadre leaders. All in all, due to an unexpected combination of untypical and coincidental elements, the highly controversial agenda of women's training accidentally acquired the top priority over other important administrative tasks in Changhua from February 1940 onward.

²⁵⁴ Lu Jifang, "He Yangling xian sheng zhuan lue" (The Brief Biography of He Yangling), *Zhuixi (Remembrance)* (Beijing: China Culture and History Press, 2009), 3

Having abnormally abundant numbers of female cadres did not mean that women in Changhua would be trained immediately. The greater autonomy Changhua women enjoyed did not guarantee that they would naturally respond to the call from the government and its female agents, not to mention their acceptance of an abstract patriotic ideology and the policy propaganda that the trainer intended to deliver. According to the report Dong Zhongsheng sent to the provincial authorities in 1939, a small group of local educated females, about 65 women aged from 16 to 30, were initially mobilized for Huang Shaohong's visit. Given Changhua's relatively primitive cultural and economic development, recruiting these 65 women probably drained the entire pool of the educated female population.²⁵⁵ The official logic was both simple and wishful. On the one hand, these educated women were supposed to make a good impression on Dong's supervisor. On the other, if the government could mobilize and train all educated females, who usually came from well-off elite families and had a clearer understanding of the importance of female participation in modern state building, other women from lower social statuses would also be inspired to join the training. The same report also demonstrates that the initial training, which contained instruction of patriotic propaganda and basic military training, was so successful that these 65 women became active teaching assistants in the second round of training aimed at the other Changhua women.

However, the picture that emerges from Dong's later article was quite different, and significantly more complicated. The deployment of the female cadre squad in Changhua did not initially bring too much efficacy to the training. Even after retraining these 65 "backbone" women, who turned out to be so uneducated that they had virtually forgotten or never understood in the first place what Dong had tried to instill into them in March 1939, the student female

²⁵⁵ ZPA L029-001-0956 "Yuqian, Changhua, Anji xian zheng fu gong zuo bao gao" (The Working Report of Yuqian, Changhua, Anji County Governments), 7-8.

cadres still found it difficult to recruit new trainees.²⁵⁶ More often than not, female student cadres alienated local educated women because of their “exotic” dress and the manners they brought from more urbanized areas. The “misbehavior” of female student cadres, such as wearing male style military uniform and sandals that exposed body curves and their feet, stopped the local cultured ladies with non-Western upbringings from participating in the training.²⁵⁷ Contrary to the enlightenment imagination of modern feminists, it was women who had little education and social capital who were the most responsive to the training program, which provided literacy classes and some entertainments such as singing, hiking and acting. To accommodate the tastes and schedules of these rustic women, female student cadres were forced to give up their more efficient and systematic forms of training. Instead, the entire female cadre squad was divided up, and sent into villages and even hamlets. There, one or two female student cadres held small chatting seminars close to, or directly in, individual households during the morning and afternoon when local women did not need to prepare meals or do chores. In so doing, the women who had their own housekeeping done were more likely to show up and absorb some messages from the trainers after these hours of “gossiping”.²⁵⁸ These seeming meaningless small talks turned out the very foundation of later large-scale mobilization and regular training. Local women might have no idea of why they should walk in a line, and turn right and left like a soldier. But after months of these small meetings, women were eventually willing to show up all together and practice what they had learned when Dong Zhongsheng summoned an inspection ceremony for his supervisors in June 1940. The extent to which these local women were capable of assisting military actions or following orders from the government is not clear. However, one

²⁵⁶ Dong Zhongsheng, “Wo men ru he zu xun fu nu,” 7.

²⁵⁷ Dong Zhongsheng, “Wo men ru he zu xun fu nu,” 9-10.

²⁵⁸ ZPA L029-001-0956 “Yuqian, Changhua, Anji xian zheng fu gong zuo bao gao,” 117. Dong Zhongsheng, “Wo men ru he zu xun fu nu,” 8. Zhejiang sheng di san liu dong shi jiao tuan, “Changhua xian Heqiao zhen fu nu ban xun lian shi shi jing guo,” 25-28.

thing is certain: the active response of the trainees, who demonstrated significant progress in literacy did provide Dong's supervisor Wang Hao, and the top official of West Zhejiang He Yangling, with a legitimate excuse to defend the magistrate of Changhua against accusations of his administrative incompetence. After the inspection, Wang Hao immediately praised Dong Zhongsheng's success in his women's training in an administrative report: "The effect of training was pretty good."²⁵⁹ This was the very beginning of Dong's representation as a model rather than a nuisance in the official documentation.

One should not forget that even Dong Zhongsheng himself could not have expected the real effects brought about by the women's training, which at the start was probably just a final desperate attempt to alleviate the pressures being applied by the top authorities. A while after the training opened, Dong observed a surprising phenomenon. The locally educated women, the initial target of mobilization, began to join the program. It was only when this magical change occurred that Dong Zhongsheng realized how it happened. Locally educated women, though initially reluctant to condescend themselves to such an "indecent" project, were eventually stimulated to do so when they saw their less privileged counterparts singing and laughing along with the female student cadres who appeared to have no intention to ask for the elite women's "condescension." They must have been shocked to hear the song lyrics written by Dong Zhongsheng's most capable Central Politics School assistant, Wang Fei, who encouraged women to walk out of their kitchens and villages so as to liberate themselves and contribute to the nation.²⁶⁰ Feeling that they might be replaced by outside competitors and surpassed by their indigenous inferiors, these local elite women eventually devoted themselves to the training with

²⁵⁹ ZPA L029-001-0986 "Zhejiang sheng di yi qu xing shu chun ji shi cha bao gao" (The Spring Inspection Report of Zhejiang First Administrative Circuit), 30.

²⁶⁰ Xia Yuying, "Kang ri shi qi Linan, Yuqian, Changhua san xian de fu nu hui ji qi zhu yao huo dong" (Woman Associations in Linan, Yuqian, and Changhua and Their Major Activities during the Time of Resisting Japan), *Linan wen shi zi liao* 2 (1990), 163.

a strong motivation that was rooted neither in patriotism nor the enlightenment belief of gender equality.²⁶¹ In a sense, it was jealousy, rather than reason or the morality conceived by rational administrators like Dong Zhongsheng, which created the momentum of the campaign.

The extent to which this training turned Changhua women into reliable government assistants is hard to evaluate. For those who believe that human beings can be, and can only be, motivated by a few concrete interests, such as material rewards and improvement of social status, the content of the training appears to be of little practical effect. Instruction in some concepts of Chinese nationalism, teaching patriotic songs, and providing basic military and healthcare knowledge no doubt had a very limited, if any, influence on the everyday life of most of the female trainees. However, if one agrees that what can account for strong motivation varies with different gender, social group, cultural background, and politico-economic context, then the evidence does not exclude the possibility that the women's training in Changhua did meet some success. For instance, it seems very a fact that the song written by Wang Fei actually caught the heart of those local women who had very low opinions of their husbands and state of marital life.

One way of answering this query is to see what Dong did after the unfolding of the training. Dong's other major campaign was the organization of able-bodied men into local compulsory militia units, and was carried out roughly simultaneously with the women's training. Although Dong Zhongsheng never openly admitted the connection between woman training and the organization of reliable militia, judging by the following events indicated in the archives and in Dong's narratives, one can make an educated guess that the women's training did increase the executive power of Dong's government. Because Dong could count on trained females who had much greater direct influence on their husbands or sons to mobilize males, the executive power of the government was thus indirectly increased. This capacity brought extra administrative

²⁶¹ Dong Zhongsheng, "Wo men ru he zu xun fu nu," 7.

resources from the Acting Office, which saw the potential of woman as necessary supplement of labor force and administrative power. From 1940 onward, women started to be mentioned in official documents as indispensable participants to all kinds of administrative tasks. It seems reasonable to assume that those “big nannies” might have become more amiable toward the governmental agents if they built some friendships during the training. Consequently, it became much more likely that the county government could communicate with and command Changhua men, who became more cooperative to the administrative requirements on account of the influence of their wives. Depending on the specifics of the coalition between the “big nannies” and their men, Dong Zhongsheng was able to enforce some unusual measures. For example, he provisionally formed mixed sex units to carry out certain administrative tasks. For Dong Zhongsheng, whose comprehension of the role of women in Changhua was improving over time, he realized that it would be ridiculous to maintain an absolute sex distinction since women had always been an integral part of labor force in various mountain productive activities. With this understanding in mind, Dong was more optimistic about the benefits of these provisional mixed-sex formations, while he was also more tolerant towards short-term turbulence. For instance, despite the fact that mixed-sex arrangements resulted in males harassing female members during their duties, Dong Zhongsheng never withdrew the formations.²⁶² As early as the end of 1940, Dong had already combined women with militia soldiers in all kinds of task, including winter reclamations and illiteracy elimination campaigns.²⁶³

²⁶² ZPA L029-001-0933 “Changhua, Jiande, Kaihua, Fuyang xian zheng fu er shi ba nian du gong zuo bao gao,” 14.

²⁶³ Following Dong Zhongsheng’s successful experience, mobilizing women to participate in agricultural production became one of the major policies greatly and frequently promoted by the Acting Office. ZPA L033-001-0627 “Changhua jing ji, Tianbei zheng zhi de shi ping pan, xue shu de dan sheng, Tianbei min zhong kang zhang shi lue,” 307. ZPA L041-000-0014 “Zhexi xing shu xing zheng tan hua hui hui yi juan (ge zhong jing ji wen ti bao gao)” (The Minute of West Zhejiang Administrative Conference (Economic Issues)), 23. Dong Zhongsheng, “Yi ge gong zuo shi li: zu xun min zhong sao chu wen mang hu zhu geng zhong zi wei zi ji” (A Case of Working: Organizing people, Eliminating Illiterates, Mutual Help of Plowing, and Self Defense and Sufficiency), *Tejiao*

Compared to his earlier imprudent and wishful attempts to divide up two sexes for moral reasons, the decision of Dong Zhongsheng's administration to actively promote the cooperation of "big nannies" and men in the same units reflects the growing maturity of the young administrator and his crew. This maturity, however, should not be seen merely as the outcome of structural reasons. If Dong Zhongsheng learnt anything during his first year of administration, it was that the scientific way of administration based on "objective" observation of social conditions and "general human natures" needed to be seriously rethought. Enforcing infallible plans which were based on rational calculation and scientific facts was not really that important to wartime administration. Instead, it was flexible actions and a strong sense of reality that mattered. If an administrator was to take advantage of transient crises and the available resources so as to complete administrative missions that could under no circumstances be construed as industrial products upon standard assembly lines. After all, administration and governance was conditioned, but not ultimately fulfilled, by social and environmental factors. Moreover, seeing administrators as mere passive observers of their political milieu bears the risk of oversimplifying the contradictory relations between local affairs into a few consistent social mechanisms or administrative formulas, which may never have been legible, or even existent, in advance. On this point, while the assistance of women in the special Changhua society was absolutely a decisive element, the manner in which Dong Zhongsheng managed to establish an effective militia is worthy of an independent and detailed analysis.

Establishing and organizing a militia was indispensable not only for local security, but also for efficient administrative enforcement. It never an easy task for a county government in modern China: the scarce fiscal resources of an ordinary county government rendered it very unrealistic that a magistrate could form a militia force exclusively with government funds. In

tongxun (News of Special Education) 5:6.

consequence, county governments usually had no choice but seek out resources from the local elite. This was especially the case during the war, when county governments were painfully short of financial support. However, the more the county government relied on the local elite to form militia, the less reliable and effective the militia would be to the local administration, which inevitably had to constrain its power in order to ensure local cooperation and endorsement. In this situation, striking the subtle balance between a reliable militia force and sustainable local political and fiscal support was a problem for county administrators. Dong faced a situation that was even thornier than in the general case, because there were two elements that made the extent of militarization in Changhua's local society significantly higher than the average level. To begin with, Changhua was a kind of internal frontier on the margin of Jiangnan, and had long been a land that harbored shed people, hunters, itinerant traders, thugs, smugglers, and other marginalized groups who sought better opportunities of living no longer available in the overdeveloped core areas along the lower Yangtze valley. Just like other frontier societies, difficult terrains and scattered immigrant communities often made for weak administrative control which in turn incurred violent conflicts between those who sought resources and those who sought order. Under such circumstances, firearms, regardless rifles, pistols, or simply primitive handmade shotguns and muskets, were essentially necessities to daily life. A very rough survey done by Dong's county government in 1939 indicated that there were at least 2000 guns, most of them homemade shotguns loaded with gunpowder, owned by civilians.²⁶⁴ Insomuch as the county had only about 15000 able-bodied men, the gun/men rate was much higher than elsewhere in Chinese, not to mention that the lower Yangtze valley, which was an area long famous for its sophisticated literary culture and weak martial spirit. This culture of

²⁶⁴ ZPA L029-001-0933 "Changhua, Jiande, Kaihua, Fuyang xian zheng fu er shi ba nian du gong zuo bao gao," 19. Given that the scale of the militia Dong Zhongsheng planned to establish was exactly about 2000 men. 2000 was very likely an underestimated number of civilian guns in Changhua.

militarization had been further reinforced by the recent war. The military fiasco in the winter of 1937 had basically turned the entire Mt. Tianmu area into one large arsenal. Wherever defeated armies passed by, a lot of pistols, rifles, sub machineguns, and even heavy weapons were jettisoned and left to civilians. The guns were so numerous that for a while, it only cost a few *yuan* to buy a rifle and 40 *yuan* for a sub machinegun (when the war began in July 1937, an ox was worth about 50 *yuan*.)²⁶⁵ As a result, there were self-appointed militia forces everywhere in West Zhejiang after 1938. Both local governments and civilian individuals found that collecting guns left by the regular army or from the black market was a very economic way of arming themselves. This self-arming craze was such that the central government had to forbid local governments and civilians in this area from “stealing” army weapons, or even hiring deserters.²⁶⁶ This national injunction might still be more or less followed by county governments. It could barely affect civilians.

For Dong Zhongsheng, the plethora of arms did more harm than good. Due to the excess of guns, Dong was able to follow the requirements of the county institutional framework to finance and arm an 80-man professional self-defense force in a short time. He even helped to organize another two similar forces for his supervisors.²⁶⁷ Nevertheless, unless he could find stable fiscal sources both inside and outside the county, 80 men, though they were far away from enough in the frontline county that had to deal with external and internal security threats, was already the

²⁶⁵ Lang Yulin, “Kang ri shi qi Zhexi wu zhuan dou zheng de hui yi” (The Memoir of Armed Struggle in West Zhejiang during the Time of Resisting Japan), *Zhejiang ge min wen shi zi liao xuan ji shang* (The Selective Collection of Revolutionary Cultural and Historical Materials of Zhejiang Volume One) (1982), 116. When Dong and his crew took the office of Changhua in March 1938, they voluntarily reduced their salaries to the extent that a head of sub county district could only get 10 *yuan* a month. 10 *yuan* was seen by them as a very low but enough income to support an official’s life in the mountain during the early stage of the war. Then, a *yuan* could often buy several hens.

²⁶⁶ ZPA L029-001-0342 “Ge ji guan bu dui bu zhun shou rong guo jun li san shi bing wu zhuan” (All Units Are not Allowed to Recruit and Gather Stray Nationalist Soldiers and Their Weapons), 7.

²⁶⁷ *Zhexi zheng lue zong shang tao* (The General Reflection on Political and Administrative Strategies in West Zhejiang) (Yuqian: West Zhejiang National Culture Press, 1941).

maximum his newly recovered administration could afford, no matter how cheap guns were. Meanwhile, any potential challengers for local dominance could also easily accumulate military capital and acquire relative superiority over Dong's fragile administrative authorities. Taking this political instability into account, establishing a compulsory militia that could support the limited professional self-defense force but would not need to be paid by the government became the top priority.

Of course, enlarging local militia was only the first step. Dong Zhongsheng still needed to find a way to use the militia to promote the executive power of his administration. After more than a year of trial and error, Dong and his crew had developed a much more pragmatic approach to pondering the pros and cons of a policy. Partially on account of their growing administrative sophistication, and partially due to limited choices they had, on the issue of militia formation Dong Zhongsheng's county government decided to strengthen its ability to be administratively powerful by suspending some of its executive power.

The logic of this thinking, if indeed there was one, was rather contradictory. Perhaps the best way to understand it is to follow through its tortuous course that led towards the solution. It started with a dilemma. Organizing a reliable county militia remained the most effective way to improve the government's executive power, which was so critical to central wartime tasks, such as conscription. At the same time, the tradition of local self-defense was often inextricable from the parochial custom of resisting any attempts of the state to draft able-bodied men for national defense. The contradiction between self and national defense was especially incompatible during the war against Japan. For most ordinary people who had no stake outside of their rural communities, the scale of the war in mainland China was so large that even fighting within the motherland could mean an unbearable odyssey to places that were hundreds, or even thousands,

of miles away from home. In contrast, serving in local self-defense militia corps made far more sense. In addition to the self-interested motive of avoiding the dangers and hardships of fighting in a regular army, being a militia soldier was the most direct way to protect everything really meaningful to servicemen. Against this background, in many counties militia or self defense units were soon full of first-rate able-bodied men aged between 18 to 35, rather than middle-aged second rate ones who, under the conscription law, were the only legal candidates for enlistment in the militia units because of their lesser military value. Changhua's proximity to the Japanese occupation forces and the battlefield did not make forming militia units any less of a predicament. While immigrant laborers from adjacent counties in southeastern Anhui and East Zhejiang had tended to leave Changhua for better security and job opportunities, indigenous Changhua able-bodied men only had stronger reasons to stay at home, since the exodus of immigrant workers had created a serious labor shortage.²⁶⁸ Here the problems arose. To facilitate the establishment of effective, reliable and affordable militia units, Dong Zhongsheng needed to offer people motivation to serve the county government, and offer substantive material rewards or political privileges. The exemption from regular military service was undoubtedly the most attractive and inexpensive thing he could promise. However, once the militia corps became a hotbed of shirkers from military service, the county government would inevitably fail on their obligations to fulfill fair and effective conscription. This was a failure that could directly lead to the removal of a magistrate. Similarly, if Dong chose to give top priority to conscription requirements and treat all first-rate able bodied men indifferently, whether or not his militia corps could meet the standards of reliability and efficiency would be a big question. In a word, there was no happy medium that could meet both conflicting needs.

²⁶⁸ ZPA L029-001-0985 "Zhexi xing shu Tiannan shi cha zu guan yu xun shi zhang dou zhong de "Tiannan" bao gao," 62.

The reminiscent nature of both official archive materials and Dong's articles tend to generalize the successful formulas and dismiss the frustrations and compromises. As such, one must pay close attention to any details that may point to crucial missing pieces of the big picture. At the first glance, Dong's story in the articles of *Service* is relatively straightforward and impeccable. First, he had civilian guns collected and registered. Then, he trained and organized the owners of the guns into militia units. Dong Zhongsheng mentioned in passing that these militia members were first-rate able-bodied men who were exempted or suspended from serving the army, and thus were able to fully concentrate on their local duties. Consequently, according to his narratives, everything, including conscription, went well.²⁶⁹

The truth is that the compulsory militia, which was formed on 8 March 1939, was probably just another administrative show prepared for the authorities. At the time, the militia was far from a real organized unit. During the gambling crisis of late March, many people, including militia members, had actually gambled right inside the militia office in the village. Then, these same militia members participated in the gunfight against the self-defense team that was sent by the county government to stop the gambling feast. No doubt outraged and warned by the incident, Dong Zhongsheng began to seriously "revise" the militia organizations in May 1939. He collected and registered all civilian guns, then proceeded to distribute these guns "reasonably" to militia members.²⁷⁰ We do not know details of this gun distribution. However, it is likely that after being registered and branded, most guns, as pieces of private property, were returned to their original owners. So far, it remains unclear how an effective militia could have been formed.

There are many signs in the archives and within contemporary testimonies that indicate that the formation of an effective militia corps, one of Dong's most renowned administrative feats,

²⁶⁹ Dong Zhongsheng, "Wo men ru he zu xun wu zhuan zhuang ding (How We Organized, Trained, and Armed Able-bodied Men)," *Fuwu* 5:3/4 (1941), 20.

²⁷⁰ Dong Zhongsheng, "Wo men ru he zu xun wu zhuan zhuang ding."

was achieved at the cost of fair conscription. Although Dong Zhongsheng claimed in his article that the county administration under his command had always met the conscription law quotas, according to the report of a journalist who worked for an official-sponsored magazine, the draftees were exclusively from economically vulnerable families that were least able to escape from conscription. This was a very common phenomenon during the war against Japan.²⁷¹ This testimony gives us a clue as to how Dong formed his militia, and further hints at the underlying connections between conscription injustice and militia efficacy.

As mentioned above, Dong claimed in the article that all militia soldiers were legally free from regular military service. It turns out a claim which was used to dismiss preemptively possible accusations of violating conscription law by enlisting the first-rate and able-bodied men to noncombat militia units. Dong Zhongsheng never explicated how such first-rate able-bodied men were categorized and confirmed by the county government as eligible for conscription exemption. Nevertheless, the following quotation from Dong's article exposes some critical but not so bright messages that Dong could only deliver to junior Central Politics School students very artfully and cryptically.

At the time, militia unit members were enlisted by baojia leaders as able-bodied men aged from 18 to 35... whose bodies were strong and desires to resist Japan high... Besides, there were two principles [of enlistment]: First, those who came from well-off families, had higher education, or more brothers, should be enlisted prior to those who came from poor families, were illiterate and had fewer brothers. Second, those who owned local handmade guns or were exempted/suspended from military service should be enlisted first... [The latter is particularly ideal because] those exempted or suspended from military service have the biggest stake in the hometown and care most about the security and order of the local communities. Ever since

²⁷¹ Mingdi, "Changhua xian zhan shi nong cun jing ji gai kuang" (The Overall Situation of Changhua County Wartime Rural Economy), *Hezuo qianfeng: zhan shi ban* (*The Cooperative Avant-garde: Wartime Edition*) i9/10, 46.

we adjusted the organization of militia, in principle militia members were all those who were free from military service.²⁷²

This description contains some critical clues. First of all, the militia in Changhua, according to Dong's confession, were entirely formed by the first-rate able-bodied men who should have served in the regular army. Second, those militia members were actually selected by the government to be exempted from the military service, rather than spontaneously qualifying for regulations of exemption. As Dong Zhongsheng admitted in another article "On the Experience of Conscription in Changhua," judging who was qualified for exemption was a difficult task. People would do everything to help their sons technically meet the regulations of the conscription exemption law (e.g. having a household's sons be adopted by different relatives who did not have a male heir, so that all those males would then qualify for exemption because the law protected the only (step) son of a family from being recruited). The county government, as a result, was forced to pursue a very complicated, situation-dependent and sometimes-subjective process of differentiation (e.g. finding out whether those sons were only adopted right before the conscription). Under the circumstances, the county government did have some room to decide who should be enlisted and who should not. For example, Dong Zhongsheng's county government deemed that all adopted sons who still lived with their biological parents rather than step-parents were all disqualified for exemption, even though Dong did actually not tell his readers how the fact of cohabitation was confirmed.²⁷³ Dong's description, skillful though it might have been, actually reveals how those males who were of a higher priority on Dong's militia recruitment list were exactly those who were most likely to use their better economic and social capital to acquire an exemption from military service. Probably very aware of this

²⁷² Dong Zhongsheng, "Wo men ru he zu xun wu zhuan zhuang ding." 21.

²⁷³ Dong Zhongsheng, "Changhua zheng bing jing yan tan" (The Experience of Conscription in Chuanghua), *Fuwu* 4:1/2 (1940), 13.

“coincidence,” Dong Zhongsheng very studiously tried to give ordinary readers an impression that being enlisted into the militia units was actually a “burden” rather than a privilege, by contrasting the “well-off,” “higher educated,” and “more brothers” type against men who were “poor,” “illiterate,” and “fewer brothers.” In eyes of administrative laymen, Dong seemed to be doing subaltern families a favor. However, those experienced administrators and thoughtful Central Politics School students must have learned from Dong’s careful narrative strategy that those first rate able-bodied men enlisted into militia units were given exemption from military service precisely because they came from well-off and gun-owning families. This is why Dong Zhongsheng could argue that: “those exempted or suspended from military service have the biggest stake in the hometown and care most about the security and order of local communities.” In so doing, Dong was able to turn almost 1800 first-rate able-bodied men into militia soldiers. In view of the fact that the official number of able-bodied men in Changhua, first and second-rate taken together, was only about 15,000, Dong Zhongsheng must have acquired a significant portion of males from the upper social levels who had privilege of not serving in the army.

Dong must have thought that it a worthwhile deal to exchange a fair process of conscription for a reliable militia force. Otherwise, he would have had no reason to write articles containing controversial messages that could have easily lead to indignant accusations of corruption and incompetence. According to his narratives, the deal did help the county government establish a free, relatively reliable, and effective militia force in a short space of time. Compared to other self-defense corps that hired mercenaries, Changhua’s militia was very cheap and controllable because it was entirely formed by indigenous males who lived in the communities and had stakes in its survival. Militia members basically raised themselves, while supervised by both the county government and their neighbors. Because of these close local connections, the militia units could

be deployed in every administrative sub-villages (*bao*) or even the smallest hamlets that scattered the mountains.

It was true that the conscription in Changhua never met the fairness and efficacy this modern institution supposedly boasted in other advanced countries. Dong's practices also completely violated the spirit of public administration, which valued impersonal mechanisms in the administrative process. Nevertheless, the reality indicated in the archives and other sources, though filled with various institutional flaws and problems, was acceptable and corrigible. Low physical conditions and a high rate of draftee desertion, the two usual phenomena that accompanied serious conscription injustice, were largely kept in check.²⁷⁴ Dong Zhongsheng knew that if he simply gave all upper-level people exemption without paying attention to the interests of people on the bottom, the consequence would be unlimited cheating that aimed to shift all of the conscription burden down to those least capable of protecting their families or themselves. Meanwhile, those who benefited from their current social and political status would not appreciate or respect Dong's authority if his administration was seen as having little choice but to compromise with the powerful local elites. For these reasons, Dong Zhongsheng managed to maximize his limited but substantive leverage of approving exemptions. He did not indifferently grant the exemption applications that passed through the regular institutional channels, which would certainly not have been the expected behavior of a public administrator who had been taught to obey official regulations and protect those who maximized their own interests by following legal procedure. Instead, he sent his crew to direct and participate in monthly village meetings, in which all able-bodied men, and inevitably many of their "big nannies" who attended to defend the interest of their husbands and sons, were present to decide

²⁷⁴ By 1942, the total amount of draftees was only 1933. the moderate quota of the county was also a reason that the problems of conscription in Changhua remained in control. ZPA L033-001-0627 "Changhua jing ji, Tianbei zheng zhi de shi ping pan, xue shu de dan sheng, Tianbei min zhong kang zhang shi lue," 34.

who were eligible for exemption.²⁷⁵ Under the supervision of the government representatives and local people, the powerful families might still have had the ability to influence the meeting and benefit themselves. However, it would be very unlikely if they totally ignored the ordinary villagers' sense of justice and were able to pass solutions that completely victimized their vulnerable neighbors, still less to get final approval from the county government. Through what Dong Zhongsheng called "the democratic procedure," the county government was able to form an unstable but workable alliance by finding cooperators among both ordinary people and local strongmen. More importantly, because people needed to periodically compete for the limited quota of exemption from military service, which was ultimately decided by the county government, those who had been enlisted into militia units felt obliged to follow Dong Zhongsheng's order and serve communities at least to the point where neither the government nor ordinary people had any strong reason to kick them out.

Dong Zhongsheng's administrative stick and carrot tactics did not stop there. To further remind those lucky militia members of the impermanency of their privilege, the county government prescribed that those who received exemption certificates should pay an annual renewal fee of these certificates. With the income from this fee, the county government could give every serviceman's family a small stipend every year. Last but not least, after the militia force had enhanced the county government's executive power, it soon began to replace inept militia leaders with more capable ones who had been trained by the county government. In so doing, Dong Zhongsheng's administration managed to substantively minimize the damages of its imperfect conscription policy, while consolidating its ultimate authority over setting the rules of interaction between government and local society.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁵ Dong Zhongsheng, "Changhua zheng bing jing yan tan," 14-15.

²⁷⁶ ZPA L029-001-0956 "Yuqian, Changhua, Anji xian zheng fu gong zuo bao gao," 116. Another important reason

Again, the characteristics of a frontier society were very crucial to the consolidation of Dong's administration, which was established on a reliable militia force. Compared to the highly developed and stratified societies in the core area of Jiangnan, such as Suzhou, where Dong Zhongsheng had spent the first three years after his graduation and witnessed there the unshakable power of the nationally renowned gentry, Changhua, as a land of small pioneers, migrant agricultural labors, charcoal burners, and "uncultured" women, was too primitive to allow gentry power to take root.²⁷⁷ As a local proverb indicated, Changhua was a relatively equal society where "the poor were above mendicancy while the rich were short of big money." (*qiong bu yao fan fu bu guo wan* 窮不要飯富不過萬) As such, local strongmen were never quite powerful enough to monopolize the relatively sufficient socioeconomic and military resources.²⁷⁸ Dong Zhongsheng's democratic procedures worked, in a large sense, because they were not too inconsistent with the local reality where no one could "represent" the interests of the "mainstream."

With the assistance of the militia force, for the first time after Dong Zhongsheng came to Changhau he finally had the ability to really enforce the modern measures he should have fulfilled in the reports sent to the provincial authorities two years ago. To deemphasize the fact that the militia force was only established very recently, Dong Zhongsheng claimed in his articles and reports that Changhua's militia was only the upgraded version of the previous able-bodied organization. Dong Zhongsheng's narrative was designed to give readers the impression

that enabled Dong Zhongsheng to retrain and replace original militia cadres and captains was those male student cadres who came with their female counterparts to Changhua after February 1940. While female cadres took charge of woman training, male cadres were assigned to train militia members. Dong Zhongsheng, "Wu nian de gong zuo gan bu he gong zuo jie duan," 12.

²⁷⁷ Dong Zhongsheng, "Kang zhan qian Su Jia Hu di zheng gong zuo" (The Land Administration in Su, Jia, and Hu before the War of Resistance against Japan), *Dongfang zhazhi* 15:i3 (1981) · 63.

²⁷⁸ ZPA L033-001-0627 "Changhua jing ji, Tianbei zheng zhi de shi ping pan, xue shu de dan sheng, Tianbei min zhong kang zhang shi lue," 139.

that the compulsory militia was an integral part of a well-planned administrative agenda, one which contained no components that were “heterodox” to the ultimate fulfillment of rationalization in public administration. His intentions actually remind us to pay attention to those pre or non-modern aspects that he thought unsuitable for a good story about modern politics and public administration. Dong knew better than anyone that in order to modernize the government’s political capacity, he had to maintain, rather than remove, the ingredients that seemed “impure” in a real recipe of administrative modernization. That is why, to reassure the parochial Changhua people that the militia force had nothing to do with supplying the regular army, Dong Zhongsheng was willing to give his militia quite a rustic name that was widely used by Changhua people - the Locally-formed Gun Squad (*tu qiang dui* 土槍隊) - rather than the self-defense force, which bore growing connotations of being an auxiliary unit to the regular army. For similar reasons, how to supply his militia with black gunpowder used only by old-fashioned firearms became an issue that pertained to the sustainability of modern executive power.²⁷⁹

Before long, the locally-formed Gun Squad encountered a crisis, but it was also a opportunity for it to prove its real value, beyond working with “big nannies” on the winter and spring cultivation. In the October of 1940, the Japanese army, having finished its campaigns in Central China, launched its long-awaited military invasion of West Zhejiang. Though this military invasion only turned out to be a short-term raid, it was the first large-scale military action that presented itself to the Acting office and the counties under its jurisdiction. Given the weak existence of the regular Nationalist army in this region, the authorities decided not to confront the Japanese forces directly. All county governments were ordered to destroy modern

²⁷⁹ ZPA L029-001-0956 “Yuqian, Changhua, Anji xian zheng fu gong zuo bao gao,” 116. Dong Zhongsheng, “Ru he jin du” (How to Ban Gambling), *Dong Zhongsheng xian sheng quan ji zhong zhang shi xian zheng*, 305.

roads in order to slow down the movement of Japan's heavy equipment. Because no one knew whether or not the Japanese could be stopped, even the Changhua county government, which lay a mere 50 kilometers away from the starting frontline of the Japanese invasion, were asked to detonate five majestic stone bridges on the already narrowed Hanghui road (this connected the Zhejiang provincial capital Hangzhou with Huizhou in Anhui province). Two choices lay before Dong Zhongsheng. First, he could follow the orders of the impatient military, who had grimly told Dong: "You lose your head if you let the Japs cross a bridge." Second, he could risk his life to preserve those bridges for the local people, who had relied on these historic pieces of architecture to deliver mountain products since they had been built by some Qing Huizhou merchants. Dong Zhongsheng choose the second option, promising the military authorities that his administration was definitely capable of blowing up the bridges before the Japanese actually arrived. Due to his insistence, the authorities agreed to preserve these bridges temporarily. Dong Zhongsheng immediately launched a countywide evacuation campaign, mobilizing all the militia units he had. While some militia were scouting and couriering, collecting and delivering messages that told the latest location of the enemy, others were busy transporting all available masons in the county to drill holes and set explosives within the very solid bridges. Others still were assisting in the transportation of materials, governmental documents, and people to evacuation sites deep in mountains.

Because the Japanese troops retreated before reaching Changhua, it is hard to judge the real effect of the evacuation campaign. A few things, however, are clear. Dong Zhongshen probably would have not had taken a chance over the five invaluable stone bridges if he had no confidence in his Locally-formed Gun Squad. He wrote a report after the incident, informing the authorities that with the assistance of Locally-formed Gun Squad, the evacuation proceeded in an orderly

fashion, and therefore any losses were very small. Dong Zhongsheng concluded with pride: “Having these missions accomplished, an official could finally feel a sense of achievement and with a clear conscience.”²⁸⁰

After the 1940 incident, Changhua’s Locally-formed Gun Squad was widely promoted by the Acting Office as a successful model of enhancing executive ability at low cost.²⁸¹ Many county governments in the area began to inform the Acting Office and the provincial authorities that they had established their own Locally-formed Gun Squads.

It is tempting, perhaps, to generalize Dong’s experience as a reasonable strategy of giving conditional favors the local powers, thus undercutting their ability to undermine the government’s administrative capacity, and, by extension, its legitimacy. Although this generalization may not be that far from what actually happened, this way of understanding presumes the pre-existence of a rational goal, and thus distorts the nature of Dong Zhongsheng’s success.

It took Dong Zhongsheng’s young administrative team two years to gradually turn the able-bodied man organizations that initially only appeared in the official documents into real administrative tools. Dong Zhongsheng could never count a rationality project that had been enacted in advance, any more than he could foreseeable social or political scientific mechanisms that simply awaited discovery. Every step of innovation was followed by problems to which there were no ready solutions contained in laws or textbooks. Nor could Dong’s administrative innovations be transplanted onto other places without some fundamental revisions. The profound influence of Changhua’s specific social environment on Dong Zhongsheng’s administrative

²⁸⁰ ZPA L029-001-0956 “Yuqian, Changhua, Anji xian zheng fu gong zuo bao gao,” 104. Xu Yaisong, “Dong Zhongsheng zai Changhua er san shi” (A Few Things of Dong Zhongsheng in Changhua), *Dongyang wen shi zi liao xuan ji* (*The Selective Collection of Cultural and Historical Materials of Dongyaang*) 4 (1987), 129-130.

²⁸¹ ZPA L033-001-0484 “Di yi qu xing zheng du cha zhuan yuan jian bao an si ling san shi nian qiu ji shi cha bao gao” (The 1941 Autumn Inspection Report of the Censor of the First Administrative and Inspectional Circuit), 20.

innovations cannot be overestimated. From the atypical women's training to the Locally-formed Gun Squad, the characteristics of internal frontier and wartime society were always decisive in the formation and success of these policies. However, it would be also incorrect to see Dong Zhongsheng's administrative endeavors as the mere corollaries of the sociopolitical structure in Changhua and West Zhejiang. The following section will examine what Dong Zhongsheng did after acquiring these initial administrative successes, and discuss why Dong's administrative experience eludes the paradigm of the rationality project preferred by public administration.

Section Two: Administrative Rationalization Based on Human Impreciseness

By the middle of 1940, the county-wide Locally-formed Gun Squad network had become well established. Relying on it as they did, the administrators of the county government were no longer troubled by an absence of reliable personnel to assist in the implementation of governmental tasks. There were competent militia units in almost every community, and the government could count on them to carry out many measures. For example, the task of summoning people in assigned regions to be casual porters, who would deliver ammunition and other supplies to the army, was burdensome and could easily lead the disaffection of civilians. The members of Locally-formed Gun Squad, due to their familiarity with the tangible household situations in their communities, were much better agents when it came to dealing with the details of this corvee distribution than the army officers, who simply tended to catch anyone they could find. When troops, whether regular or guerilla, passed through Changhua and found that all of the communities were guarded and organized, they were more likely to discipline themselves and accept the logistic assistance offered by the county government. In this way, the government was

better able to screen people from the direct harassment of the army, and win the cooperation of both the army and the people.²⁸²

Encouraged by the improvements to the administrative facility, Dong Zhongsheng decided to further consolidate the authority of his county government. If the challenge of Dong Zhongsheng administration before 1940 had been to recover and consolidate its basic functions, the tasks it faced after that point were only more difficult and complicated. With the development of the county government's executive ability, Dong Zhongsheng certainly had more administrative means to pursue new goals and policies. Nevertheless, as I will go on to show, the early experience of Dong's administration limited how he dealt with new situations, and caused problems from policies that had been part of previous solutions.

Admittedly, tough realities had forced Dong Zhongsheng to develop unusual administrative approaches. Despite this, difficult circumstances did not simply turn Dong and his team into thorough realists, and they did not discard entirely all of their peacetime agendas that had no immediate use during wartime mobilization. Rather, when the situation permitted, Dong exuded a strong tendency to readopt the endeavors that he had been best prepared by his prewar education. With the executive power he had newly acquired, Dong felt it was high time to rebuild the county hall for the Changhua government. Here, he could apply his undergraduate major, civil engineering, which he had not had any opportunity to use even during his stable prewar stint serving in the prosperous Jiangnan.

As mentioned previously, Changhua had lost its county hall during the Taiping Rebellion that had stricken the county over eighty years ago. From that point on, the magistrates, including Dong Zhongsheng, had proven that a county administration could still be maintained, for better

²⁸² Dong Zhongsheng, "Wo men ru he ban li bing chai" (How We Implemented Military Corvee), *Fuwu* 7:2/3 (1943), 26-28.

or for worse, even when there was no formal office for the government. While the working conditions of the dark, small civilian rooms - designed to deter burglars rather than for administrative efficiency - was definitely an important reason for the proposition of the new construction, the personal influence of Dong Zhongsheng was equally critical. In many ways, aspirations towards becoming a “civil engineer mayor,” a popular stereotyped image of the American public administrator, was shared by many Central Politics School students, who probably also provided a major impetus to pursue this reconstruction project.

Within two years, the new county hall and offices had been built (essentially by free labor). Because almost all of the necessary materials, such as lumber and bricks, were easily acquired from Changhua’s heavily wooded mountains, the new county government building could be majestic and rather cheap. The office of the magistrate was set at the top end of a long stair, which stretched up the slope of a hill. Dong praised this design, believing that it made the county government appear more formidable in the eyes of those people who intended to try and bargain with it.²⁸³ Certainly, though there are case studies that draw off Foucaultian conceptions in order to explicate the role of architectural splendor in the formation of solid political rule, people who would reject any element of physical or psychological augustness in enlightened modern politics may still question the necessity of mobilizing people for such a project without emergency. Dong Zhongsheng must have felt the mental weight of this event on the minds of the Changhua people, or at least, on those around him. Dong saw this construction as a milestone dividing his early struggles from his later political innovations.²⁸⁴

While the construction of the county hall was in process, Dong Zhongsheng wasted no time to use his new executive power to put into practice the subject of his graduate studies, land

²⁸³ Dong Zhongsheng, “Ru he chong jian xian zheng fu quan bu fang wu” (How to Rebuild All Houses of County Government), *Dong Zhongsheng xian sheng quan ji zhong zhang shi xian zheng*, 58-69.

²⁸⁴ Dong Zhongsheng, “Wu nian de gong zuo gan bu he gong zuo jie duan,” 10.

measurement and registration. He decided to have all lands in Changhua, including the obscure plots that hid on the wild mountain slopes, registered and taxed. This policy was no less controversial or difficult than the mobilization of the women. Although mountains covered more than 93 percent of the county's total area, customarily only a small part of these lands were officially registered, and were very lightly taxed. The tax rate of mountain land was only one-fifteenth that of ordinary arable lands.²⁸⁵ Therefore, when Dong Zhongsheng announced his intention to make the tax burden fairer, the Changhua people who had tax-free mountain lands saw their rights threatened. After they had already experienced so many troubles, Dong Zhongsheng and his county government could not fail to notice such a negative response among the people. As the major promoter of prewar land investigation and registration in Jiaxing, one of the most prosperous counties in Zhejiang, Dong knew better than anyone how complicated this mountain land compilation project was going to be. Regardless of the inevitable local resistance launched by landlords, any countywide land project would only succeed in the hands of well-trained personnel, who knew how to operate the measuring instruments indispensable for precise registration. In this regard, the combination of Changhua's backwardness and its rugged terrain made it very hard place for modern technocrats to turn real lands into abstract data that would be legible to the state.

Even taking all these disadvantageous elements into account, land registration remained a very desirable policy. The wartime experience had given these young administrators an acute sense that they should do whatever they could. For Dong, the backwardness of Changhua meant unexpected advantages and opportunities. He referred to county gazetteers, and found out that before the Taiping Rebellion the population of the county had reached 230,000, almost triple its

²⁸⁵ Dong Zhongsheng, "Shan di bian cha zai Changhua" (The Mountain Land Compilation in Changhua), *Fuwu* 7:10 (1943), 2.

populace in 1940. However, the food the county could produce in 1940 was only a mere third of the annual consumption required by its current 80,000 residents. In other words, if there had once been 230,000 people in Changhua, they must have had extra resources in order to obtain the sufficient quantity of food. Theoretically, in addition to its arable lands that were known to Dong's government, the county should still have the unrecorded resources to feed another 150,000 mouths.²⁸⁶ Based on this speculation, Dong Zhongsheng had good reason to take a chance. Due to the lack of equipment and funds, it was true that the county had never been able to measure the total amount of land among mountains. The last unfulfilled land registration of 1936 had left hundreds of thousands of blank measurement and registration sheets (this was also a plus, insofar that Dong Zhongsheng did not need to print out any new forms!). In other words, as long as he could find some way to get these "ghost" lands measured, the tax base of the county would significantly increase. As a specialist of land measurement, Dong Zhongsheng was the ideal candidate to use the "residual value" of those sheets and carry out a low-cost land measurement exercise with relatively primitive tools and skills.

With these considerations in mind, Dong Zhongsheng and his crew agreed that land registration was a necessary step if the actual taxability of the county was to be fathomed, and a sound fiscal base established.²⁸⁷ Resolved to this project, they began to organize a blanket investigation, similar to what they had done two years ago when they went out in snowy days to gather household and able-bodied man registrations. The difference this time was the extent of their executive power, which was now rooted in a militia network that reached every hamlet – or, at least, this is what they believed. In addition, they enlisted forty odd rural high school youths, and gave them intensive short-term training on the basic knowledge and techniques needed for

²⁸⁶ Dong Zhongsheng, "Shan di bian cha zai Changhua," 1.

²⁸⁷ ZPA L029-001-0956 "Yuqian, Changhua, Anji xian zheng fu gong zuo bao gao," 109.

land measurement and registration. It was undeniable that Changhua's mountainous terrain would impose some special difficulties on any precise measurement attempt. Nevertheless, since the poor mountain county did not own much in the way of modern measuring equipment, from the very beginning Dong and his crew had no intention of launching a meticulous process of scientific gauging. Instead of striving for crystal clear accuracy, Dong Zhongsheng was ready to accept any data that was sufficiently correct for the Changhua people to arrive at an agreement with his government. Under the circumstances, the technique of pacing (literally, using the distance of a person's stride), first adopted in prewar Xiao county, became the major way to measure mountain lands. Imprecise though it might be, pacing was definitely represented great progress over to local's original way, where the size of land was gauged according to the range over which a human could be heard yelling, or a gong knocking.²⁸⁸ This "modern" innovation turned out feasible when used in Changhua's southern and eastern parts, where the terrain was relatively easy and most of the taxed lands were concentrated. By June 1940, two months after Dong had first proclaimed the policy and campaigned for the Changhua people's support, most mountain lands in these aforementioned areas had been measured and registered by Dong Zhongsheng's short-term trained technicians and members of Locally-formed Gun Squad. Dong Zhongsheng must have almost seen success smiling up at him.

Unfortunately for Dong, the mountain land compilation project soon encountered a near-insurmountable backlash. Problems arose when it was launched in the western and northern districts, where the most mountainous and rugged areas of the county lay and where the people owned the majority of unrecorded mountain lands. As such, they had the strongest reason to boycott Dong Zhongsheng's apparent tax raising project. Their resistance was informed by historical precedent. Had Dong Zhongsheng paid attention to every page of the county gazetteers,

²⁸⁸ Dong Zhongsheng, "Shan di bian cha zai Changhua," 2-3.

he would have noticed that the western district of the county had been the hometown of a Ming imperial concubine, whose family received tax privileges in their mountain lands. Ever since then, a lot of mountain lands in the district had always been exempted from the normal tax rate, despite the fact that the Ming dynasty had collapsed more than three hundred years ago.²⁸⁹ What Dong Zhongsheng did, therefore, was not only a blatant case of fiscal predation but also a rude breach of a time-honored prerogative. Once such clear economic motivations became intertwined with this identity of imperial legacy, people in the western district rose up in an unprecedented movement of collective action. On the day of the official hearing, the government agents found that not a single person was present. Individual landlords refused to provide free meals to technicians who looked to help them confirm their property rights. It did not take long for Dong Zhongsheng to realize that this situation was serious. In July 1940, he rushed to the western district, and mobilized in person all of the village leaders and gentry to his hearing. This meeting only further embarrassed the magistrate, for all he received was an even clearer “no” from the people. Faced with this premeditated collective boycott, for the first time after he took the office of the county the young and healthy Dong Zhongsheng fell seriously ill.²⁹⁰ In the course of the following months, Dong Zhongsheng kept sending representatives to the western and northern districts out from his sickbed, and continued to insist on his policy, although there little progress was being made in the troubled districts.

I will describe the other administrative tactics and tools that Dong Zhongsheng could have used to nullify the local resistance later. However, let us for the time being be satisfied with what Dong Zhongsheng provided in his article for *Service*. Upon encountering the sudden strike launched by the well-organized local interest, Dong Zhongsheng had no choice but to seek allies

²⁸⁹ ZPA L033-001-0627 “Changhua jing ji, Tianbei zheng zhi de shi ping pan, xue shu de dan sheng, Tianbei min zhong kang zhang shi lue,” 112.

²⁹⁰ Dong Zhongsheng, “Shan di bian cha zai Changhua,” 5.

both inside and outside of Changhua. He held a large hearing, which included the gentry and community leaders from other corners of the county in an effort to isolate the protestors who only resided inside the western and northern districts. At the same time, Dong Zhongsheng did not hesitate to ask for endorsement from his teacher-supervisor He Yangling, and other former classmates. Major officials in Mt. Tianmu area were soon convinced by their student and friend Dong Zhongsheng, and decided to back his compilation of mountain land as a priority policy of the entire West Zhejiang frontline. More importantly, on August 2nd 1940 (the date of the largest hearing), officials and guards were sent by the Acting Office to fill out the meeting hall. Both their words and their presence delivered a clear message: Dong's policy was fully authorized by the provincial government. Last but not least, as we will see in the coming passages, Dong Zhongsheng's county government had increasingly acquired control over the local transportation networks that were critical to the shipment and sales of agricultural products. Eventually, overwhelmed by this alliance between the Changhua local elites and higher authorities, Dong Zhongsheng's opponents agreed to let their mountain lands be measured and taxed. Thus Dong Zhongsheng overcame the boycott, and increased the amount of taxable land 14 times over, and the land tax of Changhua by 17 times.²⁹¹ Under the pressures of the war, this dramatic increase in fiscal income was no doubt a remarkable success, and Dong came in the first place among all the magistrates in Zhejiang on the collection of land tax.

Impressive as it was, we should not forget that such a breakthrough was accomplished, in many ways, through open violation of the principles of modern science and professionalism. Dong Zhongsheng's approach to land measurement was very similar to the one that was first developed in Lanxi and later applied to Xiao County during the prewar era (See Section Three in

²⁹¹ Dong Zhongsheng, "Shan di bian cha zai Changhua," 4-7. ZPA L033-001-0627 "Changhua jing ji, Tianbei zheng zhi de shi ping pan, xue shu de dan sheng, Tianbei min zhong kang zhang shi lue," 111. 306.

Chapter One). Dong's decision to launch a county-wide land measurement project with primitive equipment and unprofessional personnel, therefore, was a reflexive act of demodernization that enhanced the ability of state by consciously limiting the application of the most scientifically advanced techniques and replacing them with less scientific practices. From this perspective, it is only when we suspend and problematize those assumptions of the techno-scientific politics that we can attempt to redefine what modernity meant and how it was formulated in this indigenous context. As clearly shown above, adopting a fundamentalist stand towards the professionalization and rationalization that originated in the ideology of modern Western science could not have brought any meaningful improvement to Dong and his poor county. Whether in the political realm of administration or in the more technical field of land measurement, such rationality projects were unexceptionally undergirded by a kind of mechanistic worldview, which led people to reduce reality down into simplified facts of "relevance" and consistent logic. Based on these "facts" and "rules," reality was to be perceived and reframed according to some axiomatic approaches that could be planned and followed universally. Changhua's reality, however, defied this worldview and required a different mode of analysis. Accordingly, "facts," "rules," and the relationship that they bore to their milieu, were unfit for a conceptual framework of public administration where objectification spelled the exclusion of human factors.

This is not to maintain that the formation of this political entity was an independent modernity exclusively developed by Dong's team in Changhua. Both Changhua's reality and the administrative characteristics of Dong Zhongsheng were the outcome of a set of intricate interactions between numerous factors, including a "fully-fledged" techno-scientific modernity, which could hardly be fixed to a specific geographic territory or people. A political regimen born in this vein, therefore, could never acquire the eternity and universality, despite what modern

science claimed. The Changhua regime was destined to be a series of continual, provisional, and “flawed” attempts, a set of ever-evolving dialectics between innovation and frustration. The downturn in the situation that instantly followed Dong’s unprecedentedly successful land reform stands as testament to such a protean essence in the modernity of politics.

Throughout the end of 1940 and entirety of 1941, Dong Zhongsheng’s primary concern was to further enlarge and consolidate the fiscal foundation of the county government. The mountain land compilation had only been the beginning. The county government could now not only comprehend its taxable lands, but also take control of some extra public lands that were not claimed by any private landowner. The county government decided to use these public lands, together with smaller strips of land that “reemerged” after the strategic digging out of driveway surfaces that had formerly occupied civilian fields, to establish separate and sustainable public property as a stable financial sources for its grass-root apparatuses, such as districts, townships, and villages.²⁹² Once these sub-county units could be financed by those new public properties, Dong Zhongsheng expected that the county’s grass-root administration could be staffed with better paid functionaries who would be more capable of rationalizing administrative processes than the hastily recruited rural youth whose poor performance had often given Dong cause for embarrassment.

To guarantee the fulfillment of this ideal, Dong needed to generate income from public properties that did not make money themselves. As such, Dong Zhongsheng mobilized his people, including the Locally-formed Gun Squad and trained women, to make the cultivation of these public lands compulsory. In the next chapter, we will see the problem of this public property system and the reasoning of public administration behind it. Here, it is suffice to know

²⁹² Dong Zhongsheng, “Jian li xiang zhen gong you tu di zhi du” (Establishing Village/Township Public Land Institution), *Ren yu di (Man and Earth)* 3:11/12 (1943), 37.

that faced with a decreasing pool funds and an increasing list of tasks, Dong Zhongsheng was only one of many Chinese wartime administrators who found that a public property system based on forced labor was desirable, though it defied the rationality of free labor market.

The new campaign started in the winter of 1940. Dong sent his model plowing teams, formed by Locally-formed Gun Squad members and big nannies, to first perform compulsory winter cultivation of public land, and then ask all Changhua people to grow winter crops, such as wheat, if they did not want their fallow lands to be put to mandatory government use. Dong Zhongsheng believed that this administrative order would only urge peasants to use up earlier seeds and capital stored for the spring of 1941, and he saw no need to wait for seeds and loans promised by the provincial authorities.²⁹³ He did not explain whether the seeds prepared for spring cultivation were different from those that would be viable in winter. As a result, the 1940 winter cultivation was a totally forced movement of food production.²⁹⁴ Even so, in Dong's optimistic calculation, the forced labor did no harm to Changhua people since they would benefit from increased food production and the wartime boom in food prices sooner or later. Enriching the grass-root governmental branches would further alleviate the burden of people. To cement his administrative alliance and shore up his foundation in Changhua, Dong Zhongsheng did not forget to emphasize that the income of public lands would first be used to finance Locally-formed Gun Squad. Dong Zhongsheng genuinely seemed to see himself as a patriarch of a clan. He invested in, rather than exploited, the labor of his people so as to make a fortune for his big family. As such, the temporary sacrifices of the people would be worthwhile, at least in Dong's eyes.

²⁹³ ZPA L033-002-0060 "Ti an guo chong dong zuo wu zai zhong mian ji ban fa da gang bing jing fei yu suan" (The Proposal of the Outline of Enlarging the Area of Winter Cultivation and Its Budget), 10.

²⁹⁴ ZPA L033-002-0046 "Changhua xian dong zuo wu" (Changhua County Winter Crops), 4-6. Dong Zhongsheng particularly ordered that members of Locally-formed Gun Squad could not be exempted from participating in the cultivation.

The initial gains of the campaign were impressive. More than 15000 *mu* (about 10 km²) of wheat were grown during the winter cultivation.²⁹⁵ In addition, for the first time the grass-root county apparatuses were financed by their own public properties. However, to Dong's great surprise, this successful harvest was followed by a food crisis that almost turned into a serious famine. In retrospect, although the seeds of crisis had been sown before Dong Zhongsheng arrived in Changhua, his administrative measures inadvertently facilitated both the outbreak and the seriousness of the problems.

When China was forced to fight against Japanese invasion in 1937, the Nationalist government did not have any plan or extant system in place to manage either the military or civilian food supplies. Fortunately for China, there were continuous nationwide good harvests during the first four years of the war. This unexpected piece of luck made it relatively easy for the government to acquire food at low prices through the market. However, by 1941, the escalation and prolongation of the war had gradually exhausted the food surpluses in the decreasing territories still under Nationalist government control. In addition, the climate in 1941 was less ideal for agricultural activities than it had been in previous four years. Thus the old method of relying on the market for sufficient food supplies became progressively infeasible after 1941. Moreover, a vicious inflation caused by severe fiscal deficit and overprinting of paper money made it increasingly difficult for the government to buy materials and pay its soldiers and servants in cash. Under the circumstances, the Nationalist government enacted a grain levy policy in 1941, which required peasants to pay their land tax in kind rather than in cash. At the same time, the government also tightened its control over the circulation of food in markets around the nation. In so doing, the Nationalist government attempted to directly control a huge

²⁹⁵ ZPA L029-001-0986 "Zhejiang sheng di yi qu xing shu chun ji shi cha bao gao," 29.

amount of food to supply its army and civil servants, or be stored as a reserve and used to stabilize the fluctuations in food prices.²⁹⁶

While the overall rationing of the policy seemed advisable, its actual implement in local societies exposed many problems innate to this food management strategy. If we take the Mt Tianmu area as an example, it is evident that the food levy system caused more problems than solutions. Due to its mountainous terrain, the Mt Tianmu area had long depended on food imports from Jiangnan or Anhui to supplement its indigenous food production. As a result, a well-functioning food market was extremely critical to food supply in the area. While the outbreak of the war had greatly disturbed the mechanism of the market, the Mt Tianmu area, lying in the interstice between the two belligerent states, was still able to utilize underground or alternative networks to continue the necessary procurement of food. For example, Changhua was able to import more food from adjacent Anhui so as to replace the quota provided by Jiangnan, and thus cover its deficit in food production.

Contrary to its policy intention, the enforcement of an in-kind land tax and strict food regulation significantly reduced the amount of food circulating in the market. To prevent food from flowing to other jurisdictions or to the enemy, local governments around the nation, provincial and county alike, forbade indigenous food from being exported out of their jurisdiction in the hope of maintaining the largest possible food reserves to meet the food levy quota and for emergency use. This tactic, though widely adopted by local governments, turned out to be particularly harmful for places where food was scarce and where people who did not or could not produce their own food had always needed to rely on the market to survive.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁶ Chen Lei, “Kang Zhan shi qi guo min zheng fu de liang shi tong zhi” (The Food Control of Nationalist Government during the Time of the Resistance War against Japan), *Kang ri zhan zheng yan jiu (The Journal of Studies of China’s Resistance War against Japan)* 1 (2010), 23.

²⁹⁷ These policies in fact greatly increased the difficulty and cost of normal food circulation. For example, many

Changhua and most counties in Mt Tianmu area belonged to this victimized group.²⁹⁸ The Changhua county government itself forbade local food from being exported, and yet expected that adjacent counties would continue to let their crops circulate freely.²⁹⁹ Dong Zhongsheng and other officials in the area saw the dilemma very clearly, but could not come up with a solution. Logically, they should allow free food circulation among all non-occupied territories.³⁰⁰ In actuality, this free internal circulation strategy solved few problems. The Japanese occupiers intentionally created inflation in places close to Nationalist-controlled Western Zhejiang in an attempt to raise the food price artificially. As a result, the grain prices in the outskirts of the occupation zone could be 10 times higher than in the nearby Nationalist markets. Such a huge price gap gave a very strong temptation to large-scale food smuggling. To frustrate this particularly evil form of economic invasion, Changhua, in addition to other counties along the fringes of the Japanese occupation zone, had few choices but to slow down their own food circulation, because it was very difficult to confirm whether or not the food passing through the county to the enemy zone. Additionally, the thorough sabotage to modern transportation in this area, which had been one of Dong's most impressive, mobilizing achievements, also severely hindered the normal shipment of food to market.

In fact, anticipating this structural predicament, magistrates, including Dong Zhongsheng in the Mt Tianmu area, had received orders in 1940 to enforce a policy of compulsory extra food

local troops used them as the excuse to extort anyone who deliver grains out of the jurisdiction of a county or even a village. ZPA L029-002-0245 "Liang shi guan li yan jiu (The Study of Food Management)," 45, 93.

²⁹⁸ ZPA L029-001-0990 "Zhejiang sheng er shi jiu nian du bao gao ji sheng er qu xing shu fa wen-cong jiao tu shang jian li qi lai de tian bei xin bao lei," 105.

²⁹⁹ ZPA L033-001-0481 "Di yi qu xing zheng du cha zhuan yuan jian bao an si ling san shi nian qiu ji shi cha bao gao," 24.

³⁰⁰ They did reach the conclusion of internal free circulation. ZPA L029-001-0985 "Zhexi xing shu Tiannan shi cha zu guan yu xun shi zhang dou zhong de "Tiannan" bao gao," 124.

purchase.³⁰¹ By buying up a large proportion of food not intended for self-consumption, the Acting Office intended to make it harder for civilian producers to sell food to the enemy and easier for county governments to secure a sufficient food supply in this region of scarcity. However, this countermeasure would not work unless the government knew how much food people actually produced and preserved for themselves. Against this background, Dong's promotion of mountain land compilation and an enlarged scheme of winter land cultivation can be seen as steps towards ascertaining the amount of extra food in civilian hands, and working out how the government could get access to these extra supplies.³⁰² However, with hindsight, one can also argue that in the long run, all Dong achieved were tentative measures towards an in-kind land tax, which sooner or later would lead to dysfunction within the food market. But that is with hindsight; one cannot say that the bitter fruit of the food crisis after 1941 had been grown and nurtured by magistrates like Dong Zhongsheng, who at the time had no way to anticipate the impact of their administrative actions on "market principles." In Dong's case, squeezed by the overall deterioration of wartime economy and orders from the top, his priority after 1941 was to acquire as much food as possible by enforcing county-wide food regulation, which was indispensable for the collection of in-kind land tax and the extra food purchasing. But, as Dong Zhongsheng mentioned several times throughout his articles, without a market food, the food produced in Changhua could only at best provide less than a half of its annual consumption. In this sense, Dong should have been the last man expected to see the purchasing of extra food and an in-kind land tax as the solution to the county's food shortage. As a matter of fact, for the most

³⁰¹ ZPA L029-001-0956 "Yuqian, Changhua, Anji xian zheng fu gong zuo bao gao," 103.

³⁰² According to the log of Dong Zhongsheng's inspection tour in May 1940 when his mountain land compilation was beginning, Dong Zhongsheng had already paid attention to whether big grain producers were hoarding food. See ZPA L030-000-0047 "Di ba qu Xiaofeng, Wukang, Changhua, Yuhuan, Huangyan, Sanmen xian zhang chu xun ban fa chu xun bao gao" (The Method and Report of Inspection of County Magistrates of Xiaofeng, Wukang, Changhua, Yuhuan, Huangyan, and Sanmen in the Eighth Circuit), 23.

time before 1941, Dong almost exclusively relied on imported rice from Anhui to meet the quota of extra food purchase in his jurisdiction and even that of other adjacent counties. That Dong Zhongsheng was able or obliged to import food for Mt Tianmu area was, in large part, due to the fact that Changhua, lying on the key channel connecting Zhejiang and Anhui, had suddenly become a major gate after the outbreak of the war. Standing at this strategic position, he was quite active in organizing and assisting merchants to buy food from Anhui collectively. Because of these efforts, Dong Zhongsheng claimed that before 1941 the food price had been effectively maintained at a reasonable level, and sometimes it was even lower than that the going rate of the black market.³⁰³ Still counting on the existence of this food transaction network, Dong Zhongsheng enacted his mountain land compilation policy, which estimated the tax potential of Changhua residents according to the amount of cash people stood to gain from the market by selling their mountain products.

It was only after 1941, when this market network was rendered unreliable in the face of the in-kind land tax policy, that Dong Zhongsheng turned to an administrative, rather than a market, approach. Although the executive ability of the county government had been strongly enhanced, levying land tax in-kind was still a great inconvenience for both the people and the government of Changhua. Granted that the people who had been accustomed to paying tax in cash ever since the mid 16th century, had no difficulty in understanding or accepting the amount of grain they were expected to pay to replace the cash tax, they could not help but feel burdened when delivering their in-kind taxes from their communities to tax paying stations that were often located in other mountain areas. Many people were forced to pay extra money to hire others to

³⁰³ As late as the autumn of 1941, Dong Zhongsheng's supervisor remained praising him for his "totally successful food regulation." ZPA L033-001-0484 "Di yi qu xing zheng du cha zhuan yuan jian bao an si ling san shi nian qiu ji shi cha bao gao," 24. Dong Zhongsheng, "Ru he shi shi guan li liang shi" (How to Enforce Food Management), *Dong Zhongsheng xian sheng quan ji zhong zhang shi xian zheng*, 217.

help in the shipment of their taxes.³⁰⁴ Moreover, the in-kind land tax in Changhua was required to be paid in rice. Many people, whose mountain lands did not produce rice, were forced to buy rice from an increasingly shrinking food market. For them, the tax rate had been significantly raised.

Officials were also troubled by the new form of tax, because they had to check the weight and quality of the grains and build barns to store them before they were all concentrated in assigned regional warehouses. In other words, except for the Chinese state as a whole, which gained a lot of cheap food necessary for final victory in the war, the burden placed upon county governments and ordinary people did have increased. Facing this new challenge, Dong Zhongsheng mobilized all of his personnel to establish as many tax-paying stations in close proximity to rural communities as possible. Thanks to this organizational strategy and the enhanced executive ability within the county, the quota of in-kind land tax was quickly gathered. This village-by-village way of collecting in-kind land taxes, as Dong Zhongsheng's supervisor praised in an archive, was so efficient and reliable that it was as though "landlords directly collected rents in person from their tenants."³⁰⁵ Ironically, in this case, the highly meticulous and rational implementation of a national policy by a model official working for the state in a modern war was likened positively to the old "exploitive" practice of landlords, and in a document that aligned itself with a revolutionary regime where China's landlords were derided as a negative social stratum who usually had no connection to the modern or the reasonable.

³⁰⁴ Dong Zhongsheng, "Tianfu gai zheng shi wu de jing yan yu xin de" (The Experience and understanding of Levying Land Tax in Kind), *Fuwu* 6:2 (1942), 6.

³⁰⁵ Simply put, Dong Zhongsheng collected in-kind land tax hamlet by hamlet by sending all personnel he could mobilize to the assigned area and finishing the collection of the place within a day. Then, he moved on to the next village. ZPA L033-001-0627 "Changhua jing ji, Tianbei zheng zhi de shi ping pan, xue shu de dan sheng, Tianbei min zhong kang zhang shi lue," 306.

If levying in-kind land tax was still a task that, though very troublesome, was implementable for the Changhua county government, then the compulsory extra food purchase posed an almost insurmountable set of problems for Dong and his team. Theoretically, the policy was only aimed at the bigger landlords, who were most likely to store a lot of extra food in order to profiteer from the elevated food prices. In reality, without the supply from the outside, the majority of Changhua people had little, if any, extra food. Given Changhua's geography, big landowners often owned infertile mountain lands that produced little rice. There is evidence, both in articles and the archives, which show Dong Zhongsheng's disguised intentions to mitigate the pain of enforcing extra food purchases before 1941. Even when he received the order from the Acting Office to hold a full-scale investigation into the potential extra food amount, Dong's enforcement remained halfhearted. In stark contrast to the "hardline politics" he displayed during the collection of in-kind tax, Dong Zhongsheng essentially let local people report how much extra food they had. Given that Dong was launching his mountain land compilation when he received the order of extra food investigation, his lukewarm implementation is somewhat understandable. If it were possible, Dong may well have not carried out the investigation at the moment when people already had reason to doubt his motives behind the measuring of mountain land. Moreover, Dong Zhongsheng clearly knew that searching for extra food in Changhua would only intensify, not alleviate, the food shortage. Nevertheless, once food circulation had effectively been inhibited by the in-kind land tax policy, Dong was then forced to ask the Changhua people to sell their assigned quota of extra food to the government at the official price that was significantly lower than the market one. To make it worse, Dong's insistence on forging on ahead with winter cultivation in 1940 despite the absence of seeds, manure, or loans provided by the province turned out to be an agricultural failure. In this case,

his actions were entirely neglectful of peasant wisdom. He did not know, nor could he admit, that Changhua's people knew better than anyone why tilling in winter was unfeasible: the fertility and ecological conditions of the mountain lands were such that they could not support sustainable and profitable winter cultivation. Dong's over-optimistic scheme of winter cultivation therefore exhausted the soil's fertility for the next year, and accelerated topsoil corrosion on the mountain slopes, which had been a problem ever since the boom in food prices during the war had encouraged many peasants to clean out the natural vegetation of the mountain for food production.³⁰⁶

According to the testimony of an investigator who researched Changhua's economy, the combination of natural disasters and improper food policies had brought the county's per capita daily rice consumption in 1941 down to an extremely dangerous low of 150 grams, which was far from the amount an adult needed in order to maintain normal labor. Although the investigator added that Changhua people had some coarse cereals that eventually helped most residents get through the crisis, one can only imagine the pain and ill nutrition people endured before the harvest of 1942. Some people lived on porridge, while others sought out the edible tubers of wild ferns in nearby Anhui. The investigator estimated that after deducting the amount of rice demanded by the in-kind land tax and the extra food purchase, the per capita daily rice consumption in the following 1942-1943 year would only increase to 188 grams, and that was banking on a good harvest in the autumn of 1942.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁶ As Dong Zhongsheng admitted, not too long after the 1940 winter cultivation, he had to launch a campaign against overexploitation of mountain lands so as to protect irrigation facilities from being damaged by mudslides. ZPA L033-002-0046 "Chang hua xian dong zuo wu," 4-6. Dong Zhongsheng, "Ru he shi shi guan li liang shi," 205.

³⁰⁷ It should be noted that per capita rice consumption was not a very accurate indicator of how many calories people actually ingested because consuming rice as the only staple food was too expensive for most peasants whose main food for everyday meals was always coarse cereals. ZPA L033-001-0627 "Changhua jing ji, Tianbei zheng zhi de shi ping pan, xue shu de dan sheng, Tianbei min zhong kang zhang shi lue," 106-108. The investigator's

Dong was highly aware of the developing crisis, and did try to alleviate it. He argued with the authorities about the feasibility of buying up extra food in Changhua. After his appeal was overruled, Dong could only try to mitigate the pain of his people.³⁰⁸ Besides encouraging people to buy food from the outside, the county government distributed the small amount of grain it could buy from Anhui to districts and villages, in hopes of providing emergency food for a few poor families in need. After the food markets in Anhui were shut down by its provincial authorities in fear of losing grains to other counties, Dong mobilized his patron network in the Acting Office to acquire other small amounts of coarse cereals.³⁰⁹ None of these measures ultimately generated any thorough salvation. After all, Dong Zhongsheng was a small magistrate, and could not change the macro structure or fundamental factors that underpinned this food crisis. At this juncture, Dong could only convince himself and his people that they were good people who were willing to bear such awful tribulations for the sake of the nation.

When the crisis finally passed – on account of better climate conditions and other reasons of which we have very limited understanding, - Dong Zhongsheng and the officials in the Mt Tianmu area turned their focus to reconnecting with the outside market network. To reach this goal, the first thing they had to do was undertake the very modern task of reorganizing an effective civilian transportation, so as to refacilitate the circulation of goods cut off by the war. Paradoxically, this ambitiously modern scheme was necessarily designed along the lines of the

estimation was also supported by the meeting record of the Acting Office in 1942. The Acting Office urged all counties to enhance in-kind land tax levy and extra food purchase in the hope of acquiring some reserve for the spring 1943. Changhua, as the gate of Mt Tianmu, was asked to help exportation of grains from Anhui province. In other words, Dong Zhongsheng were responsible for collecting food for other counties in Mt Tianmu while his own jurisdiction was still threatened by the famine. ZPA L041-000-0013 "Zhexi xing shu xing zheng tan hua hui hui yi ji lu" (The Minute of West Zhejiang Acting Office Administrative Conference), 130.

³⁰⁸ Dong Zhongsheng, "Ru he shi shi guan li liang shi," 213.

³⁰⁹ Dong Zhongsheng, "Ru he shi shi guan li liang shi," 216.

most primitive mode of transportation, which did not need any extra modern transport infrastructure.

At the end of 1941, when the situation was still worsening, Dong Zhongsheng received the order to investigate and organize the civilian vehicles, especially one or two-wheeled carts (*shou che* 手車), in Changhua. The cart was another hybrid of traditional and modern elements. The one-wheel design made the cargo cart especially mobile on narrow mountain defiles. In addition, the sabotaged modern motorways, although useless for automobiles, still made ideal transportation roads for cargo carts. To further increase its cargo capacity and adjust to bumpy roads, a rubber tire replaced the traditional wooden wheel of the cart in the early 20th century. Some bigger two-wheeled cargo carts were even manufactured with a metal brake device. With these modern improvements, a single able-bodied man who used a two-wheeled cargo cart could deliver about 250 to 300 kg of goods on mountain roads at a speed of 30 km a day.³¹⁰ Considering its cheap assembly and minimal maintenance fees, as well as its high adaptation to the mountain terrain, these cargo carts were, in many ways, better than the modern trucks that only caused logistic disasters for their owners in the wartime Mt Tianmu area. Because of these advantages, cargo carts had long been used by Changhua people, especially by those lived in the most mountainous western district, to carry out their goods to the market. According to Dong's testimony, almost every house in the western district had one or two carts in the yard.³¹¹ Controlling the use of these carts would definitely enhance the government's shipment capacity, which was crucial to the management of goods circulation.

³¹⁰ By 1940, there were already 10086 carts serving local governments in Zhejiang. ZPA L029-005-0383 "Nan min shou che dui" (The Refugee Cart Squad), 17. ZPA L029-001-0990 "Zhejiang sheng er shi jiu nian du bao gao ji sheng er qu xing shu fa wen-cong jiao tu shang jian li qi lai de tian bei xin bao lei," 64. Shen Shanqing, "Zhejiang de shou che," *Zhejiang zheng zhi (Zhejiang Politics)* 6 (1940), 83.

³¹¹ Dong Zhongsheng, "Wo men ru he ban li yi yun" (How We Dealt with Relay Transportation), *Fuwu* 7:i4/5 (1943), 22.

Long before Dong received the order to organize carts, he and other officials had relied on these civilian vehicles to meet urgent logistic requirements from the military or Acting Office.³¹² With the escalation of the war in this area, the government itself had become the largest customer that bought (albeit at prices usually lower than the market) transportation service from civilian carts. Given this situation, Dong had in fact ordered all carts in Changhua to be registered and numbered. To encourage people to serve their corvees with these efficient vehicles, the Changhua county government prescribed that they would pay a man who served his logistic corvee with a cart twice as much as that of a man with a shoulder pole, while a day's work with a cart would count for two days of a shoulder pole porter. If this policy only provided a weak attraction for cart owners to work for the government, Dong's determination to drive traditional cart brokers out of business paved the way for a virtual official monopoly of cart transportation. Dong's decision did not seem to encounter too much resistance. In all probability, the uncertainty of war and the frequency of government corvees had made cart brokerage a lot more risky and less profitable. Without these middlemen, Dong Zhongsheng's county government virtually became the main, if not the only, broker who distributed jobs and decided on prices within Changhua. Deprived of most of their commercial customers, cart owners found themselves increasingly dependant on government business. They became a kind of day laborer, though nominally they were still underpaid servicemen of the county government's transportation corvee. The formal investigation and organization of carts in 1941 only served to finally confirm what had already happened in Changhua.

³¹² As a matter of fact, officials, like Wang Hao, had combined the characteristics of cart with the war effort. In an administrative plan, Wang Hao asked county governments to narrow driveways to the extent that only allowed the movement of carts. ZPA L033-001-0553 "Xing zheng du cha zhuan yuan gong shu bao an si lin bu er shi ba nian xing zheng hui yi zong ji lu" (The General Minute of 1939 Administrative Meeting of Administrative and Inspectional Circuit), 80,

What Dong and other officials actually added to this semi-official transportation system was very similar to the commercial shipments that had been precluded by the government and the military. Dong Zhongsheng effectively turned the system into a shipment company run by the county government. It is noteworthy that this innovation was not so much a consequence of Dong Zhongsheng's business mind, as it was a convenient recognition of something that had already happened. After delivering official goods or ammunition to the designated zone, cart men tended to take some commercial commodities (often contraband from Japanese occupation zones) on their way back home since they had plenty of empty space. Dong Zhongsheng simply institutionalized this practice. Be that as it may, this policy enabled merchants to consign their goods by paying shipping fees and consigning goods to the county government. The county government then hired carts to deliver goods to their destinations. In this process, the government profited from charging more from the merchants, and paying less to the cart men.³¹³ The relevant materials suggest that this cart shipment system worked, backward though it might have been, and was one of the most important factors in maintaining the existence of a market network in this frontline zone. The archives indicated that by 1943, a few months before Dong left Changhua because of his promotion, he was in the process of (re)establishing mountain product cooperatives that would help Changhua people sell their agricultural products to the market.³¹⁴ The cart transportation system must have participated in the running of these cooperatives. Here, we can see again how the government became increasingly powerful in the economic sphere because of the war. From this perspective, it is not too hard to understand why Dong Zhongsheng could eventually force the mountain landlords in the western district to accept his mountain land compilation policy. After all, it was Dong's government, not these landlords,

³¹³ Dong Zhongsheng, "Wo men ru he ban li yi yun," 22-24.

³¹⁴ ZPA L033-006-0134 "Changhua he zuo shi ye" (The Cooperation Endeavors in Changhua), 6, 21.

that was gaining growing power in the war through the management of the transportation. One can only imagine how vulnerable those landlords would have been if Dong Zhongsheng refused to let their carts to deliver mountain products to the market.

Although there was no more food crises between 1943 and the end of the war in 1945, the extent to which Dong was successful in maintaining a subtle balance between enforcing the duties given to him by the authorities and relieving the pain of his people remains a question that is hard to answer. After all, Dong Zhongsheng was a capable bureaucrat, and not an omnipotent and benevolent god. As he openly acknowledged in his article regarding food management, he always considered the needs of the military and official units to be the top priority. Time and again, he was forced to believe that people could always find their own ways out of the wartime difficulties when there were simply no conditions for Dong Zhongsheng's government to take care of the civilian interest.³¹⁵ That is not to say that Dong Zhongsheng and his Politics School team were nothing more than the smart robots of the state machine. After years of real experience, Dong Zhongsheng, like many other officials in the Mt Tianmu area, were fully aware of the distance that separated the modern state's ideal of rational bureaucratization and the actual world of administration. Even for the sake of the state, some policies, however reasonable and important in theory, should never be carried out through institutionalized channels. This attitude alone was enough for experienced administrators to think twice before enforcing some policies that harmed ordinary people. Moreover, they knew too well how things did not always follow the logic and principles of the modern state and its political theories. The consolidation of more "modern" modes governance depended on elements that these modern bureaucrats could not control.

³¹⁵ Dong Zhongsheng, "Ru he shi shi guan li liang shi," 214-216.

In the next section, we temporarily leave Changhua and pay a visit to Xiaofeng, another county in the Mt Tianmu area that can help us understand how the world of modern administration was formed by practices and discourses that are hard to include within the category of techno-scientific modernity.

Section Three: A Regime of Fiscal leverage or Humanistic Politics

As seen from the map, Xiaofeng adjoins Changhua to the southwest. However, because they lie on different sides of Mt Tianmu, their apparent proximity is misleading on account of the mountain's high ridge. Therefore, although there were routes that joined up the two sides of Mt Tianmu, Xiaofeng had a far more close relationship, administratively and economically, with the plain counties to the east and north of the Mt Tianmu area. Its proximity to Jiangnan incurred a special set of difficulties during the war. Firstly, the economic embargo imposed by both sets of belligerents dealt a heavy blow to Xiaofeng's very commercialized economy, which had long been integrated into Jiangnan's market. Secondly, the county was repeatedly raided by the Japanese army, which launched small scale attacks from the Jiangnan plain area to curb the expansion of the Nationalist controlled zone. The county seat of Xiaofeng was burnt and sabotaged by the Japanese several times during the entire war. In other words, the highly precarious conditions of wartime Xiaofeng rendered its challenges and tasks quite different from those in Changhua, which remained intact until the very last days of the war.

Faced with these unfavorable factors, the county administration in Xiaofeng was consistently considered by the Nationalist authorities, and indeed by many contemporary witnesses, as the best in West Zhejiang, if not the entire province. Interestingly, Dong

Zhongsheng, though he never openly mentioned Xiaofeng in his writings, was clearly competing with Xiaofeng for the title of best county administration in West Zhejiang. In the official archives, Xiaofeng and Changhua were often juxtaposed as the respective models on the northern and southern sides of Mt Tianmu. Nevertheless, the following popular slogan, which spread during the war, indicated that Xiaofeng was in fact the very best among the counties in West Zhejiang:

The politics of the home front looks up to South Jiangxi, while the politics of the battlefield looks up to West Zhejiang. The politics of battlefield looks up to West Zhejiang, while the politics of West Zhejiang looks up to Xiaofeng.

Xiaofeng's reputation should, in large part, be attributed to the efforts of the county magistrate, Liu Nengchao. Liu Nengchao was a capable graduate of the department of finance at the Central Politics School, who had taken charge of land tax collection in prewar Lanxi when he was just an intern (see Section Three in the previous chapter). During his five-year term from 1939 to 1944, Liu Nengchao proved himself to be a competent and shrewd administrator, who always seemed to have a way to make his county meet every standard of modern administration. Liu's ability to meet almost all of the requirements as proposed by the Organizational Framework of All Levels of Units under the Command of a County Government (*xian ge ji zu zhi da gang* 縣各級組織大綱), or the New County Framework (*xin xian zhi* 新縣制) for short, was widely recognized by his contemporaries as a remarkable achievement. By institutionalizing all of the major functions that were supposed to be owned by a modern wartime county government, including a full scale compulsory preliminary education and rural healthcare system, the New County Framework attempted to instantly turn primitive Chinese county governments into very advanced administrative organs that would rival those in other developed countries. Although such an audacious "great leap" was rightly criticized by many incumbent magistrates as an unrealistic

public administration dream that could hardly be fulfilled in wartime China, it did not seem to pose many difficulties to Liu Nengchao's county administration.³¹⁶ By the middle of 1941, less than a year after Xiaofeng county was ordered to implement the New County Framework, witnesses from different authorities had confirmed that administratively speaking, Xiaofeng had become a "new county." Some inspectors even claimed that Xiaofeng's achievements actually overshadowed those of other counties that lay far away from the battlelines. They were especially impressed by the county government's sound fiscal base.³¹⁷ Districts, villages, and townships in Xiaofeng were probably the first governmental agencies at the sub-county level in Chinese history that had their own budgets; these had not even been fulfilled in prewar Jiangning and Lanxi. Supported by these predetermined funds, the sub-county official units could be staffed by fulltime functionaries and armed police who carried out governmental policies on a regular basis. Counting on this unprecedented rationalization of the local bureaucracy, the Xiaofeng county government was also able to handle more complicated tasks. For example, food control and supplies, which had been such huge problems for Dong Zhongsheng, were dealt with by Liu Nengchao in a much more thorough and successful way.

Through in general Liu Nengchao, unlike Dong Zhongsheng, rarely shared his administrative experiences, he did leave very detailed comments on how to pursue effective food

³¹⁶ ZPA L029-001-0985 "Zhexi xing shu Tiannan shi cha zu guan yu xun shi zhang dou zhong de "Tiannan" bao gao," 136.

In fact, Xiaofeng had become a kind of tourist site for inspectors from the rear zones because of its thorough fulfillment of the New County Framework. ZPA L033-001-0627 "Changhua jing ji, Tianbei zheng zhi de shi ping pan, xue shu de dan sheng, Tianbei min zhong kang zhang shi lue," 239.

³¹⁷ ZPA L033-001-0627 "Changhua jing ji, Tianbei zheng zhi de shi ping pan, xue shu de dan sheng, Tianbei min zhong kang zhang shi lue," 245,298. In 1941, the total amount of village and township budget was 25000 *yuan*. In other words, the average fund of a village or a township in Xiaofeng was about 2500 *yuan*, which, as Liu Nengchao's supervisor pointed out, was probably the highest in the entire Nationalist China. For example, at the roughly the same period, a village or township in Changhua could only dominate less than 800 *yuan* at best. See Wu Shuruan, "Shi cha Xiaofeng xian zheng zhi guan gan" (My Perspective After Inspecting Xiaofeng County Administration), *Fuwu* 6:5/6 (1941), 150. ZPA L029-003-0215 "Anji, Changhua, Yuqian xian zheng fu er shi jiu nian du di fang zong fen gai suan geng zheng" (The Revised 1940 General and Specific Estimated Budget of Anji, Changhua, and Yuqian County Government), 16.

control in the archives. He gave a presentation on this issue to some magistrates who attended the West Zhejiang administrative meeting in 1941. At the very start, Liu Nengchao pointed out that under the wartime circumstances, whatever classic economic theories stated, grains should unequivocally be seen as a strategic resource rather than as an ordinary commodity. For the same reason, food control was a matter of life and death to the nation, for it was the only way to solve food crises and maintain the stability of the food market. To enforce this, Liu argued that an accurate and thorough extra-food investigation was indispensable. He then turned to the concrete tactics of ensuring the accuracy of extra food investigations. As though to foresee the methods that Dong would use in Changhua's later food crisis, Liu Nengchao warned his audience that such food investigations should not rely on local leaders, who had too many personnel connections with their neighbors to accurately report on extra food amounts. Instead, Liu preferred to send government agents from other communities in order to achieve a meticulous survey. This approach too was regular and bureaucratized for most magistrates, who had difficulty enlarging their county personnel.

What makes Liu's presentation especially "modern" is the way he framed his control of civilian food. Here, Liu Nengchao showed off his financier background. If the goal of food control was to secure enough food supplies and to stabilize the market price, it could only work when the scale of extra food purchase was large and it was done quickly. The problem, however, was that the government did not have enough money to buy up a sufficiently large amount of food to influence and stabilize the market. Xiaofeng's solution, in a sense, was very direct and simple. The county government would give out promissory notes, rather than cash, to those who held large amounts of food. The period of the promissory notes varied from one month to five months, depending on the amount of extra food. In essence, the people who had the largest

amount of food, and therefore the most financial resources, were asked to sell more food to the government and to receive pay at a later date than the small grain holders. In so doing, the government acquired a financial leverage that was actually much more powerful than the real purchasing ability of the state. This policy also limited the big merchants' ability to hoard grains for speculation by temporarily depriving them of a significant part of their fortune, whether in kind or in cash, which in Liu's words acted as a kind of compulsory deposit since he did pay the interest.³¹⁸

The corollary of this full-scale extra food purchase was the inevitable imposition of total food rationing. Liu argued during another meeting that if the government expected food control to be fully enforced, the distinction between military and civilian food supplies had to be broken. Given that so many soldiers were deployed in West Zhejiang where food was always in shortage, it was entirely necessary to secure food quotas for individual civilians who could no longer acquire food from the market. According to his experience, Liu Nengchao strongly suggested that food should be distributed to every village and township rather than to a few official food supply stations.

All Liu's suggestions presumed the existence of a very strong state machine with modern capabilities, such as promissory notes endorsed by the provincial bank that calculated and paid interest to their depositors. As mentioned in the previous section, when these suggestions were followed by Dong Zhongsheng's Changhua where the local bureaucracy was not so well developed, the effects were not ideal. As such, one can sense the confidence Liu had in the modern capabilities of his Xiaofeng county government. Supposing that his confidence was warranted, we are obliged to ask how he turned a war-torn small mountain county into the most

³¹⁸ ZPA L041-000-0016 "Zhexi xing shu xing zheng tan hua hui hui yi juan (cai zheng wen ti)" (The Minute of West Zhejiang Administrative Conference [Fiscal Issues]), 128-138.

modern administration in the entire West Zhejiang. More importantly, is Liu's achievement attributable to the fulfillment of a rationalization approach pursued by public administration?

Because of the absence of Liu's own narratives, we have to rely on more "objective" materials generated by different governmental units and Liu's contemporaries. Fortunately for us, as it was the model county of West Zhejiang, sources of this kind are abundant enough to support a well-founded historical representation.

In the official archives, Xiaofeng and Changhua, as the top two counties in the entire region, were often compared, either consciously or unconsciously, with each other, as though they were twins. This comparison suggests that Xiaofeng and Changhua may well have emulated each other's useful administrative experiences. Liu Nengchao's sharing of his food investigation and control tactics is but one example. Due to the fact that Liu Nengchao did not become a county magistrate until Dong had been in his administrative position for nearly two years, Liu must have learnt some of his practical knowledge from Dong. One obvious instance is the women's training. Xiaofeng was the only county in the entire West Zhejiang area that followed Changhua's unusual mobilizing approach. Under Liu's command, Xiaofeng almost wholly copied the methods and the scale of women's training in Changhua. By 1942, both counties had trained more than a thousand women, while other counties in the area simply had no such scheme.³¹⁹ These facts indicate that Dong Zhongsheng's administrative experience had been intentionally introduced and promoted by Liu Nengchao as part of the showcase of the Acting Office's overall political development. As He Yangling's most trusted subordinate and confidant since before the war (see Section Four in the previous chapter), Liu Nengchao's role was much more complicated and important than that of passive imitator of the Changhua model. Liu was fully aware of his

³¹⁹ The grass-root cadres trained by Xiaofeng and Changhua counted for nearly 70% of total trainees. Each county contributed to about 35% of trained cadres. ZPA L041-000-0055 "Wei Zhexi xing shu di fang gan bu xun lian ji hua bao gao" (The Report of the Plan of West Zhejiang Acting Office Local Cadre Training), 5.

responsibility as a co-policymaker who had to design, learn, and generalize from a variety of administrative lessons which would offer basic approaches of local governance feasible in the Mt Tianmu area. It was because of this very reason that He Yangling let Liu Nengchao, rather than anyone else, become the magistrate of Xiaofeng; he was the doorkeeper to Mt Tianmu's main gate, which directly faced enemy-occupied Jiangnan. Both literally and symbolically, Liu Nengchao controlled what came in and out of Acting Office's political machine. In this context, Xiaofeng was meant to be a bellwether, rather than a follower, in the field of wartime administration. As a result, after 1941, the administrative approaches and tactics developed in Xiaofeng became increasingly different from the model of Changhua, and ultimately more influential. Compared to Dong Zhongsheng's "hardline politics," which mainly involved enhancing the compulsory executive power of the government, Liu Nengchao tended to use financial tools to improve the abilities of his county administration. One of the most obvious distinctions is that Liu Nengchao, despite having studied the subject and presided over past land taxations, never launched a systematic land registration like the one that was so crucial in Changhua. This distinction, as I will proceed to argue in the following passages, resulted from an intricate mix of Liu's undergraduate training, the more commercialized and cultured society of Xiaofeng, and other factors caused by the context of a modern war.

Liu Nengchao arrived in Mt Tianmu area along with his old supervisor and patron He Yangling, who had been transferred from Shaoxing in East Zhejiang to the top civilian official in the whole of West Zhejiang. Liu, as the major financial advisor of He Yangling, must have spent his early days in the Acting Office working on the economic embargo system that Huang Shaohong used as the foundation of his general wartime administrative strategy in Zhejiang. At the beginning, Liu Nengchao, just like everyone else, seemed to have no idea of how to establish

a feasible embargo framework during the war. Therefore, what he did was basically to follow the general principles promulgated by the provincial and central government, which, at least on paper, meant an uncompromising break in any economic liaisons with the enemy or the occupation zones. The outcome of Liu's effort was an embargo line that stretched more than 100 km along the northern and eastern fringe of the Mt Tianmu area.³²⁰ Theoretically, this line and the 17 check stations on it could prevent the invasion of Japanese commodities, in addition to the unwanted exchange of currencies and the exodus of important strategic materials such as grains and silk cocoons. In reality, the embargo actually inflicted significantly less pain on the Japanese, who were able to extract almost everything they needed from the most prosperous regions of China, whereas the people of Mt Tianmu had little choice but to make a living from the mountain agricultural products they exported to Jiangnan in exchange for necessary daily life commodities. The economic ties between Mt Tianmu area and the Japanese occupied Jiangnan turned out to be far harder to break than Liu Nengchao and other modern economic experts had initially imagined. Widespread smuggling never stopped travelling along the routes of peacetime regional transactions. Personnel and goods still crossed the embargo line frequently and on a large scale, while the government had increasing difficulty gaining resources from either the diminished legal economy or the burgeoning underground one. Liu Nengchao's appointment as the magistrate of Xiaofeng at the critical juncture of August 1939 was apparently a result of this predicament. One can make an educated guess that as the most trusted aid of He Yangling, Liu Nengchao was sent to Xiaofeng, the only territorially intact county right adjacent to the liminal economic space between the Nationalists and the Japanese on the northern side of Mt Tianmu, in order to figure out a proper solution to this problem.

³²⁰ ZPA L041-000-0016 "Zhaxi xing shu xing zheng tan hua hui hui yi juan (cai zheng wen ti)," 14.

Right before taking the position of magistrate, the 30 year-old Liu Nengchao submitted an article, entitled “The Self Cultivation of Youth,” to the nationally famous journal *The New Youth* (*Xin qing nian*). As though setting out an inauguration statement, Liu Nengchao encouraged Chinese youth (and, presumably, himself) to be pragmatic doers who paid attention to concrete problems and feasible solutions, rather than idealists who talked of much but did very little. Although Liu’s argument was a conventional wisdom, if not somewhat banal during the context of war, his actions in Xiaofeng would prove that he believed in what he had written.³²¹ Upon arriving in Xiaofeng, Liu Nengchao’s first measures involved deregulating the embargo regulations he had previously enacted. By shooting a few bandit ringleaders and collaborators, Liu gave himself an image of a hardliner who would not tolerate any treacherous activities.³²² This very time-honored act of political posturing probably won Liu Nengchao some time and space to adjust the previous economic policy. He wasted no time before appealing to the authorities to loosen the restrictions, and to allow some exports to the enemy zones. Among others, the fragrant powder (*xiang mo* 香末) is a case worth mentioning. The powder was a raw material of Xiaofeng, made out of the grained bark of some trees and indispensable to the making of incense used for deity worship. According to the previous embargo principles, selling it had been banned on the Jiangnan market because it allegedly contained some minuscule elements that were said to be useful for explosives production. Liu Nengchao was able to convince the authorities of the low military value of this commodity with a scientific chemical analysis, and some smart emphasis on the “superstitious nature” of the powder.³²³ Though he

³²¹ Liu Nengchao, “Qing nian de zi wo jiao yu (The Self Education of Youth),” *Xin qing nian* (*The New Youth*) 2:6 (1939), 24.

³²² ZPA L033-001-0574 “Er shi ba Er shi jiu nian du xing zheng hui yi ji lu” (The 1939/1940 Minute of County Administrative Meeting), 223.

³²³ Wu Shuruan, “Shi cha Xiaofeng xian zheng zhi guan gan,” *Fuwu* 6:5/6 (1941), 161. Fanding, “You ji qu yi ge jing ji dou zheng de shi li-Xiaofeng xiang mo he zuo she de xian kuan” (A Real Case of Economic Struggle in

never claimed it openly, Liu Nengchao actually insinuated that a modern state should not be bothered by the stupid religious needs of the people in occupied zones. After Liu skillfully appealed to the province, the fragrant powder was allowed to once again return to the market in the enemy zones. Meanwhile, under his supervision, the county government redoubled the production and sale of the fragrant powder by organizing a few cooperatives in Xiaofeng.³²⁴ Using a similar method, Liu Nengchao also successfully managed to lift other restrictions on bamboo and wood in the following years, even though these materials were not as obviously useless as fragrant powder was to the war.³²⁵ As a result, tens of thousands of tons of bamboo was sold to the occupied area every year.³²⁶ In other words, by manipulating of the definition of “national security,” such as explaining the military use of an item in an extremely narrow sense, Liu Nengchao managed to give the green light to almost all of the staples generated in Xiaofeng. In some cases, Liu Nengchao simply neglected the apparent military value of the good he was selling to the enemy zone. For example, he helped deliver Changhua’s tong oil through his jurisdiction to Jiangnan, even though Tong oil did have wide uses in the maintenance of military and industrial equipment.

At first glance, Liu’s loose control over the commercial circulation of agricultural goods was contradicted by his tight comprehension of the food market, which seemed to intensify the economic dependency and vulnerability of Nationalist West Zhejiang. A second glance, however,

Guerilla Zone: the Current Situation of Xiaofeng Fragrant Powder Cooperative), *He zuo qian feng zhan shi ban* 5 (1939), 50.

³²⁴ ZPA L033-001-0627 “Changhua jing ji, Tianbei zheng zhi de shi ping pan, xue shu de dan sheng, Tianbei min zhong kang zhang shi lue,” 299.

³²⁵ ZPA L033-001-0574 “Er shi ba Er shi jiu nian du xing zheng hui yi ji lu,” 223.

³²⁶ Liu Nengchao also convinced the authorities that the Xiaofeng wood could be sold to those people living in the occupation zone as long as they could provide certifications given by local Nationalist regimes or chambers of commerce. ZPA L029-005-0445 “Zhexi ge xian guan yu tu chan yun xiao” (The Transportation and Sell of Local Product of Counties in West Zhejiang), 22-23. Fang Bingxing, “Hui yi “Tianmu wang” He Yangling de zhong zhong zui xing” (Recall Various Crimes of the Tianmu King He Yangling), *Zhejiang wen shi zi liao xuan ji* (*The Selective Collection of Cultural and Historical Materials of Zhejiang*) 3 (1962), 113.

reveals the subtle dialectics between the market and the war effort. In many ways, Liu Nengchao inhibited the function of the food market because he respected and encouraged other sections of the market. To put it simply, the financial leverage he used to acquire extra civilian food was in large part financed by the commercial exchanges that had destabilized the Mt Tianmu area's food supply. As such, even food controls per se cannot be seen as a policy that was exclusively based on counter-market measures. To make food control sustainable, the county government under Liu Nengchao's command legalized, or at least turned a blind eye to, small amounts of food exodus. Although this undermined the effects of food control, it allowed the most socially vulnerable to get their hands on the commodities that the government was unable or unwilling to offer.³²⁷ As a matter of fact, by relying on the profits from selling materials to the enemy, Liu Nengchao and the magistrates of other counties on the northern side of Mt Tianmu were able to buy up enough food from the occupation regions to feed the entire Mt Tianmu area. Here, one can see how the formation and the maintenance of market mechanisms were never independent from the entangled goals of the state. Here, the invisible hand was actually an extension of the political arm.

Of course, the rational aspects of Liu Nengchao's practical policy should not be overemphasized. Admittedly, the Acting Office did not have enough human or military resources to patrol the entire embargo line, which was frequently crossed by armed smugglers including many Chinese regular forces who also needed the underground economy to supplement their incredibly underpaid soldiers. Thus, no official in the area could plausibly claim that they did not know about the involvement of the army in smuggling.³²⁸ Two choices lay before Lin Nengchao.

³²⁷ ZPA L029-001-0981 "Zhejiang di er qu xing shu san shi yi nian du shang ban nian shi cha bao gao" (The First Half of 1942 Inspection Report of Zhejiang Second Administrative Circuit), 37. ZPA L033-001-0637 "Zhejiang zheng qing bao gao," 22.

³²⁸ About the concrete situation of the army involvement in smuggling can refer Zhen, "Shou che fu" (Carters),

He could deny this dishonorable fact, or he could utilize the freight power of smuggling to earn his people and the government some financial resources. Apparently, the first choice was never an option for Liu Nengchao. He went so far down the second road that he even used cargo carts returning from the enemy zones to carry salt, one of the commodities constantly in a state of shortage after the normal salt transaction had been cut by the war.³²⁹ In so doing, he was able to establish a salt monopoly, and this partially mitigated people's problems in acquiring affordable salt in the mountains.

Liu Nengchao's experience exposes the misleading imagination of modern politics. According to this imagination, total war between modern nations gives rise to a state of absolute and rationally consistent antagonism. Presumably, faced with the interests of the nation, all other considerations should become secondary. However, the interest of the nation is not always easy to define. Moreover, an enemy's loss does not necessarily mean a gain in one's own national interest. What Liu Nengchao and other officials encountered in West Zhejiang was a hybrid situation, in which China's national interest was intertwined with that of the enemy's. This paradox is best shown in a meeting regarding the economic struggle in West Zhejiang in 1941. Representatives of the Second Administrative and Inspectional Circuit to which Xiaofeng and other counties on the northern side of Mt Tianmu belonged had admitted very frankly that the economic conditions in Mt Tianmu had made all theoretical embargo strategies unenforceable while there were no other economic centers that could replace the original one in Jiangnan.³³⁰ In another meeting, probably on account of some representatives' suggestions from the same

Zhejiang fu nu (Zhejiang Women) 4:5/6 (1941), 58.

³²⁹ ZPA L029-001-0984 "Zhexi shi cha fen bao gao" (West Zhejiang Specific Inspection Report), 43. ZPA L041-000-0014 "Zhexi xing shu xing zheng tan hua hui hui yi juan (ge zhong jing ji wen ti bao gao)," 33.

³³⁰ They in fact warned the authorities by pointing out that the economic embargo could work only if "the purpose of the policy was absolutely not for fiscal concerns." ZPA L029-003-0097 "San shi yi nian du xing zheng hui yi ge xian ti song wu jia guan zhi yi jian ji shen cha bao gao" (The 1942 Administrative Meeting, Opinions of Price Control from Counties, and Reviews), 175, 197.

administrative and inspectional circuit, the original draft that insisted on an uncompromising and militant economic embargo was entirely abandoned. The resolution they came up with was very vague in terms of its political tone, but clear on the practicalities. It maintained: “The exodus of our materials into the enemy zone should be absolutely forbidden. However, the sell of local products should still be nimble so as to accumulate the capital needed to purchase important materials controlled by the enemy, and to frustrate their plot to strangle the circulation of Legal Currency (*fa bi* 法幣, the national currency of Nationalist China).” Additionally, the resolution allowed people near the enemy zones to conduct transactions by barter, or in the special local currencies that could only be used in designated regions.³³¹ By decreasing the use of the legal currency in frontline areas rather than insisting on its irreplaceable legitimacy, Liu Nengchao and his colleagues could buffer the impact of the Japanese plot to pool huge amounts of legal currency, whether real or fake, into the Nationalist zones so as to extract resources, such as copper coins, and accelerate the already vicious inflation.³³² For Liu Nengchao and his colleagues, the reality was unpleasant but clear. The Japanese controlled the resources and certain irreplaceable commodities, such as soap, clothes, and medicine, which could not be provided by East Zhejiang or any of the other rear zones.³³³ While a lot of materials produced in West Zhejiang, like tung oil, tea, and silk cocoon, were indeed used by Japan to enhance its war capacities, their usefulness for China in regards to the resistance could be better maximized by being sold to the enemy, rather than kept in the Nationalist zone. Since the purchasing ability and transportation of rear zones were limited, letting extra materials and goods be sold into the

³³¹ ZPA L041-000-0018 “Zhexi xing shu di si ci xing zheng hui yi” (The Fourth Administrative Meeting of West Zhejiang Acting Office), 20, 107.

³³² ZPA L041-000-0057 “Zhexi di wei yun dong zhi zong heng mian” (The Analysis of the Enemy and Poppet Regime’s Activities), 110-112. ZPA L029-003-0097 “San shi yi nian du xing zheng hui yi ge xian ti song wu jia guan zhi yi jian ji shen cha bao gao,” 232. ZPA L033-001-0637 “Zhejiang zheng qing bao gao,” 21.

³³³ ZPA L029-003-0097 “San shi yi nian du xing zheng hui yi ge xian ti song wu jia guan zhi yi jian ji shen cha bao gao,” 195.

occupation zones did provide an alternative way to maintain both ordinary people's living standards and provide fiscal resources for effective government operation.

It was this line of rational thinking, though only shown ambiguously in archival and other published materials, which actually guided and supported Liu's administration in Xiaofeng. Many sources imply that the economic embargo in Xiaofeng and probably the entire West Zhejiang became a system that demanded transit dues.³³⁴ By taxing goods flowing in and out of the Mt Tianmu area and Nationalist West Zhejiang, county governments near the frontlines tapped into a rather rich financial source. There is reason to think that Liu Nengchao's decision to establish an independent budget for grass-root governmental units in early 1941 had a lot to do with this transit due.³³⁵ The amount raised by this tax was so vast that Liu could not only staff his local agencies with more personnel, but also arm and finance groups of guerrilla troops in addition to his county defense teams that were equipped with weapons of regular army, and establish the only county hospital in the whole of West Zhejiang. In addition, he accumulated capital for the opening of half state-run primitive industries.³³⁶ The First West Zhejiang Silk Reeling Mill established in 1940 was only the first of several workshops, such as the silk weaving mill and the Model Bamboo Paper Factory, which all turned local raw materials into

³³⁴ The tax rate of this transit due was about 4 to 6 % of the good price. Zeng Ziwei, "He Yangling zai Zhexi" (He Yangling in West Zhejiang), *Linan wen shi zi liao* 2 (1990), 135.

³³⁵ Dong Zhongsheng revealed, though with an ambiguous wording, the fact of transit due in his late year memoir article written in the US. One inspection report also witnessed that "the stores in Changhua were full of enemy commodities." Apparently, although there was an economic embargo, the actual circulation of goods between the Nationalist Tianmu area and the occupied Jiangnan was not severely influenced. See Dong Zhongsheng, "Huang Shaohong san ren sheng zhu xi," 52. ZPA L029-001-0985 "Zhexi xing shu Tiannan shi cha zu guan yu xun shi zhang dou zhong de "Tiannan" bao gao," 26.

³³⁶ Xiaofeng had become the major logistic base for guerrilla troops fighting in the enemy occupied Jiangnan. ZPA L033-001-0627 "Changhua jing ji, Tianbei zheng zhi de shi ping pan, xue shu de dan sheng, Tianbei min zhong kang zhang shi lue," 243. Xiaofeng was probably also the few counties that fulfilled the rural healthcare network required by the New County Framework in the entire China. ZPA L033-001-0569 "Ge xian xing zheng hui yi xing zheng hui yi ji lu (er)" (Administrative Meetings of Counties (2)), 94.

more valuable goods.³³⁷ In doing so, the Nationalist zone became less dependent on the external commodities that were basically controlled by the Japanese. For example, the Bamboo Paper factory bought up local bamboo and produced improved bamboo paper, which could be used in printing. The Acting Office, which had sponsored the publication of many wartime journals and newspapers, naturally became the bamboo paper factory's largest customer.³³⁸ After 1941, because these factories had become major channels by which the Acting Office gathered funds and smoothed the circulation of local products, similar ones were also established in Changhua.

Compared to Dong Zhongsheng's "hardline politics," Liu Nengchao's "fiscal politics" appear to have been more market oriented, more rationalized in terms of administrative professionalization, and more effective in controlling and collecting resources. However, it would be oversimplistic to say that Liu Nengchao was a better administrator, or a more "modern" one than Dong Zhongsheng. One should not forget that Liu was in a place that was much more closely bounded to a well-established economic network. Though their areas shared a mountain, and were of similar size and population, the social environment of Xiaofeng was very different from Changhua's. For example, unlike its counterpart on the southern side of Mt Tianmu, the more market-oriented Xiaogeng had produced a small surplus of market food for the adjacent counties before the war. There were also more members of the modern educated elite in Xiaofeng.³³⁹ All these phenomena indicated that the potential social and economic resources that Liu Nengchao could mobilize in Xiaofeng were certainly more sufficient than what was available in the relatively primitive Changhua. Moreover, it was in Xiaofeng where the modern environment created by the war was at its most extreme. Such an extreme modern situation in

³³⁷ ZPA L041-000-0014 "Zhaxi xing shu xing zheng tan hua hui hui yi juan (ge zhong jing ji wen ti bao gao)," 17.

³³⁸ The silk reeling mill had 188 employees, producing 3950 kg of silk every month. See ZPA L029-001-0990 "Zhejiang sheng er shi jiu nian du bao gao ji sheng er qu xing shu fa wen-cong jiao tu shang jian li qi lai de tian bei xin bao lei," 103-104.

³³⁹ Xu Yinlun, "He gong zai Xiaofeng" (Cooperation in Xiaofeng), *He zuo qian feng zhan shi ban* 8 (1941), 40.

turn generated a “state of exception,” which suspended those classic principles of modern politics and allowed a kind of “economic liberalism” to “optimize” the market and its administrative functions.

Most importantly, despite all the fancy modern facets of Xiaofeng’s administration, the social situation of Xiaofeng was too well developed for Liu Nengchao to take a purely rational public administrative approach. By contrast, denied a significant part of that modern social infrastructure, Changhua was an internal frontier underdeveloped enough for young Politics School administrators who knew nothing but to initiate their governments through rationalization processes, intent - though not exclusively – on improving executive power.³⁴⁰ Staffed with graduates from the same Central Politics School as it was, the administrative team in Xiaofeng had no such time or space to turn an already developed and stratified society into the most legible form of abstract data that was preferred by the ideal type bureaucracy. Consequently, Liu Nengchao and his colleagues were guided to embrace the continuity of the existing reality more quickly and full-heartedly. The way that Liu coped with the New County Framework provides an interesting example as to how a modern bureaucrat managed to limit administrative rationalization in order to optimize his governance.

On hearing that Xiaofeng was about to be reorganized into a new county, Liu Nengchao seemed to show a strong inclination to cooperate with the policy. He forthrightly informed the authorities in June 1940 that Xiaofeng’s difficult wartime situation made it necessary to adopt the New County Framework as soon as possible. As it stood, the county government had divided the county up into four districts, rather than the several villages and townships required by the

³⁴⁰ As one inspector coming from the southern side of Mt Tianmu correctly pointed out, the success of Changhua and Xiaofeng had their own respective conditions. For example, people in Changhua were relatively easy to be led while the society of Xiaofeng was economically wealthier. ZPA L033-001-0627 “Changhua jing ji, Tianbei zheng zhi de shi ping pan, xue shu de dan sheng, Tianbei min zhong kang zhang shi lue,” 307.

New County Framework, so as to best serve the spirit of the institution. Liu Nengchao was playing a linguistic game. What he really wanted to do was defend the original administrative structure of Xiaofeng divided into eastern, southern, western, and northern districts, which violated the New County Framework that intended to centralize and strengthen the authority of county government by canceling the districts and replacing them with smaller units.³⁴¹ For the efficiency experts who believed that “less is more”, Liu’s sly doings, which effectively resisted a rational organizational downsizing, was not reasonable at all. However, Liu Nengchao had every reason to respect the district’s *raison d’être* that had provided a relatively stable set of socioeconomic circles in this mountainous county. These circles of sub-county units had been proven themselves to be agile and viable in the face of armed enemy raids that tried to destroy a few administrative pivots.³⁴²

This tough environment also prevented Liu from resorting to the rosy youth-save-nation narrative. In a report sent after a Japanese military raid, Liu Nengchao explained how he

³⁴¹ According to the logic of the New County Framework, the district which usually represented the county government to supervise a few villages and townships was basically an unnecessary administrative level that should only be set to assist those county governments that had trouble administering every corner of their oversized jurisdictions. In other words, the New County Framework deemed that those smaller counties, like Xiaofeng, could and should directly command a dozen or even dozens of village and township and therefore performed higher administrative efficiency because of the simplification of administrative level. Guan Jianong, “Xin xian zhi shi shi wen ti” (The Problem of Enforcement of New County Framework), *Zhejiang min zong* 11-13 (1941), 12. Liu Nengchao’s real goal was to give his current joint offices of villages and townships legal status by calling these offices districts which were not encouraged but also not forbidden by the New County Framework. As I have shown in Section Three of previous chapter, the joint office of village and township was an administrative innovation first developed in Lanxi so as to administer several villages and townships with only one joint office and personnel. This money saving but less specified institution was not adopted by the New County Framework which apparently preferred the full institutionalization and professionalization of every village and township. See ZPA L029-001-0858 “Xiaofeng shi shi xian ge ji zu zhi gao yao jian tao” (The Reflection of the Enforcement of New County Framework in Xiaofeng), 24.

³⁴² Interestingly, after April 1941 when the Japanese army crossed the Qiantang river and turned the Politics School’s experimental base Lanxi into a frontline county, the magistrate of Lanxi quickly echoed Liu Nengchao’s approach, arguing the necessity to maintain districts which, according to the account of the magistrate, commanded their villages and townships to meet wartime tasks in ways much more efficient than the direct control of county government. See ZPA L029-001-1205 “Lanxi xian ren shi min zheng bing yi wei sheng deng gong zuo bao gao” (The Working Report of Personnel, Civil Administration, Conscription and Hygiene in Lanxi), 66.

delegated different districts to different kinds of officials. Quite contrary to expectations, the two districts that had the least possibility of confronting the enemy forces were given to young educated cadres who had some military knowledge. The most dangerous districts, instead, were entrusted to middle-aged local gentry whose composure and “local charisma” (*xiang wang* 鄉望) were more reliable in such situations, when people needed trustworthy community leaders more than they did modernizers.³⁴³ As a young official who took the county office at age 30, Liu Nengchao’s philosophy of personnel administration, while having little in common with what he learnt at the Central Politics School, was not a “reactionary” preference. The reality had taught him to respect the conservative personality, and the wisdoms of the elder generations, above some universal scientific methods that were supposed to be best comprehended by modern educated students. It was these students, in theory, who were supposed to be less polluted by this irrational and outdated conventional wisdom.

If Liu’s practicality could still be attributed to a kind of “real” form of rationality, as opposed to the theoretical reason, then the following behavior of this modern and educated financial administrator are far harder to explain from the perspective of rationalization.

Except for financing administration rationalization, Liu Nengchao put more than 16% of governmental funds into establishing countywide compulsory primary education. Despite his brilliant performance in many other administrative tasks, it was his contribution to education that eventually brought Liu Nengchao a national honor in 1943. Due to his policy, 58% of school-aged children had been put into classrooms. Certainly, one can argue that Liu Nengchao’s actions were nothing more than meeting the New County Framework requirements, which prescribed that every administrative sub-village (*bao*, a hundred household or so) should have a

³⁴³ ZPA L029-001-1205 “Xiaofeng shi shi xian ge ji zu zhi gao yao jian tao,” 25, 27.

bao school to provide a primary curriculum for both children and illiterate adults. Indeed, Liu Nengchao had opined in an article rural primary education was connected to wartime mobilization, which strongly echoed the modernizing and mobilizing logic of the New County Framework. Liu maintained that the primary education was necessary if illiterate peasants were to understand orders and notifications from the government. In a similar vein, the content of such a wartime primary education should be practical, and look to instill the political and nationalist ideology of the Chinese modern state. To an extent, Liu Nengchao just about fulfilled this vision of combining wartime administration and modern education.³⁴⁴ Several testimonies authenticate Liu's success. Children were mobilized to paint mobilizing and patriotic slogans on walls that were miles away from their thatched classrooms hidden away in the woody mountains.³⁴⁵ Student scouts patrolled around, checking strangers' identities. According to these facts, Liu seemed a vehement supporter of awakening and creating a body of qualified citizens for the purposes of modern state building. Similarly, it seems natural that a large-scale newspaper reading campaign was launched in Xiaofeng, where newspapers were distributed to the bulletin boards of every village office. Newspapers, just like school education, were vehicles of instructive messages from "imagined communities." Facing the "education of enslavement" (*nu hua jiao yu* 奴化教育) promoted by Wang Jingwei's collaborative regime, which was trying to assert itself as the real legitimate Nationalist government and described Japan as an kind liberator rather than cruel colonizer, enforcing Liu Nengchao's campaign seemed indispensable according to the logic of modern state. Here, one is tempted to believe that a politically awakened

³⁴⁴ Liu Nengchao, "Zhan qu jiao yu yu xuan chuan lian xi wen ti" (On the Connection between War Zone Education and Propaganda), *Shengli* 10 (1939), 8. Liu did ask his crew to enhance the connection between the administrative and educational sections at grass-root level. ZPA L033-001-0574 "Er shi ba Er shi jiu nian du xing zheng hui yi ji lu," 224.

³⁴⁵ Zhu Zhishui, "Xiaofeng mo mo xiao xue fang wen ji" (The Interview of a Primary School in Xiaofeng), *Tianmu* 28 (1939), 9-11.

population of modern citizens emerged out of this mass enlightenment movement. For this reason, Liu Nengchao appears, by definition, to be a fully rational modernizer who had a clear understanding of the political necessity of amplifying education so as to compete with the collaborationist regime controlled by the Japanese.

Convincing and logical though such modernizing and *realpolitik* explanations might be, on closer examination, the necessity of enlarging primary education in Xiaofeng was quite dubious, even according to the logic of *realpolitik*. For one thing, people had first hand experience that they were being attacked and plundered by the Japanese due to their nationality. For another, they witnessed in everyday life the discursive and physical existence of the modern state being distorted and demolished by both sides of the war. In this extreme situation, Xiaofeng might be the last place that was suitable for an installment of modern state awareness. Moreover, the fiscal and human resources available in Xiaofeng simply made this large-scale enlightenment project impractical. Even Liu Nengchao's most staunch supporter, He Yangling, had to admit that about 50 to 60 percent of primary schools were staffed by teachers who were themselves primary school graduates. The institute of people's education, which was responsible for the newspaper reading movement, was also criticized by Liu's supervisor as being only nominally functional. These facts remind us that fulfilling the ideal of mass education and mobilization may not be a policy that can be fully explained and understood within narrative of practical political needs.

Be that as it may, we should not simply assume that Liu Nengchao was only a bureaucrat who was good enough at speaking in official cliché to cater to the whims of the authorities. After all, if Liu had been able to "reflexively" break the hypocritical ideology of the modern state on economic issues, why should he not do the same thing in educational affairs? If his supervisor could tolerate an economic compromise, why could not they approve another one for education?

All in all, in a war without mercy, his dedication to a regimen of educating people was too painstaking and anachronistic to merely be a form of bureaucratic routinism that perfunctorily followed whatever orders descended from the upper authorities.

In this regard, we should consider the possibility that Liu Nengchao and his supervisors' commitment to education contained some sincerity. A closer examination of Liu's other behaviors reveal some strong visceral tendencies, that makes the picture of his administration more illegible for those who were expecting a modernizing story. While his dealings with financial and educational issues were full of unmistakable modern discourses and practices, Liu Nengchao demonstrated an unusual enthusiasm for renewing a cultural and ethical atmosphere. Behind the modernizing and mobilizing logic of his measures, there seemed to be a real concern for improving people's morality and mentality. For instance, Liu's direct supervisor Wu Shuluan (於樹巒) observed in an inch-by-inch inspection that he was impressed by good manners of the Xiaofeng people whom he encountered on the road.³⁴⁶ Such a comment, while clearly bearing an aspect of flattery, was not common in official documents filled with impersonal language. Another inspector, Lin Shuyin, noticed that functionaries in Xiaofeng were organized into study groups. As far as he could see, governmental workers did study and compete with each other to improve their work performance.³⁴⁷ Granted that these were all shows prepared for the inspector, they still reveal that the successful type of administration that Liu Nengchao valued had something to do with cultural and ethical qualities. Perhaps, the most prominent thing that distinguishes him from the ideal-type modern professional bureaucrat was his enjoyment of engaging with the local literati. He proactively invited the local gentry and his crew to form a Chinese poetry and opera club. The club held regular meetings, usually in Liu Nengchao's

³⁴⁶ Wu Shuruan, "Shi cha Xiaofeng xian zheng zhi guan gan," 76.

³⁴⁷ ZPA L033-001-0627 "Changhua jing ji, Tianbei zheng zhi de shi ping pan, xue shu de dan sheng, Tianbei min zhong kang zhang shi lue," 297.

official residence, to appreciate the poems and opera pieces performed by club members. Such activities that demonstrated cultural taste and cultivation were very common among official scholar magistrates in pre-modern China, but had increasingly become politically incorrect since the Republican era, when old-fashioned gentry and literati were denigrated by the modern ideology as little more than local bullies and vested interests that bogged down China's modernizing reforms. However, Liu Nengchao's association with the cultured local gentry was devoid of reluctant emotions. From prefaces that Liu Nengchao wrote for the essay collections of local literati and poems left by club members, one can sense real friendship between the magistrate and his guests. One of these poems written by a club member displays a small window into one of the club's meetings:

The dew bright and mist light amidst indistinct willow leaves, the crescent
hanging over the thatched study in the morning wind. Sitting in the aroma of
incense for a short rest after a poem chanted. How close we are to Wei
Yingwu!

By borrowing pieces from the famous work of the Tang Dynasty poet Wei Yingwu (737-791 AD), Yu Chushi, a locally reputed man of culture and the author of the poem, likened Liu Nengchao and the club members to this capable Tang official scholar. He and his comrades had shared in the common ideal of rearing people, and put the priority of governance on erecting moral principles rather than collecting taxes.³⁴⁸ Writing in this manner, Yu Chushi praised Liu Nengchao for being more than a competent frontline bureaucrat. Undeniably, even though the power of the gentry in the Mt Tianmu area had been decisively weakened by the war, and therefore rendered much smaller drag force on the promotion of efficient administration, Liu

³⁴⁸ The important allusions Yu Chushi borrowed from Wei Yingwu's original poem, "Jun zai yu zhong yu zhu wen shi yan ji" (A Feast with Literati in the Study of the Official Residence during a Rain), are translated here; "I feel ashamed for being a high ranking official but failing to benefit people.The pool of erudite literati [in my county] was as huge as the ocean... [so now I know my] jurisdiction was more important than merely offering a strong tax base." See http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_66b8a2a90100j9pa.html and <http://www.bestory.com/novel/11/100534/13469.html>

Nengchao's "cultural politics" can still be analyzed as a calculated compromise with the local elite whose hearts could be wooed by unnecessary educational investment and literary performances.³⁴⁹ This polemic speculation, nevertheless, does not help us understand whether or not higher literacy and cultural levels really satisfied the mental or material interests of the local elite; less still why the modern educated magistrate who had overcome far more intricate problems "catered" to the tastes of these local interests so actively.

At this point, we arrive at the subtler part of politics in Xiaofeng. The poem served as a confirmation that Liu Nengchao's commitment to the welfare of people and the lifting up of moral and cultural levels in Xiaofeng. In other words, these literary meetings were substantially more than social events among the local elite. They should be seen as informal but solemn exchanges of thoughts between the magistrate and his entrusted civilian opinion leaders. These "extrapolitical" communications may have been irrelevant to the establishment of advanced forms of administration, as they would surely be in eyes of public administrators who tended to see private friendships based on common cultural tastes and identity as a failure to institutionalize political participation and policy making. However, these "off record" activities lay exactly at the core of politics. Another Politics School graduate and official Lin Shuyi referred to them as "the political worker style" (*zheng gong zuo feng* 政工作風). According to Lin Shuyi's observation, while "the administrative style" (*xing zheng zuo feng* 行政作風), which characterized the governance of counties on the southern slope of Mt Tianmu, including Dong Zhongsheng's Changhua, focused overwhelmingly on the improvement and enhancement of the government's unilateral coercive executive power, Liu Nengchao's political worker style gave

³⁴⁹ As one inspector observed, the gentry power was decisively weaker in West Zhejiang than in East because of the dangerous and hard environment caused by the Japanese armed raids, which helped magistrates in West Zhejiang acquire more concentrated power in their jurisdictions. For example, magistrates in West Zhejiang had less need to share their power in judicial and militia affairs with local gentry. ZPA L033-001-0627 "Changhua jing ji, Tianbei zheng zhi de shi ping pan, xue shu de dan sheng, Tianbei min zhong kang zhang shi lue," 297.

more attention to sophisticated persuasion and encouragement of the people.³⁵⁰ Only when we start to understand this cultural or ethical politics as something other than the effect of other causes, such as a side-effect of the involution of modern state building, does it make sense why a savvy, and sometimes even sly, administrator who was by no means unfamiliar with the discourses and techniques of modern politics should have devoted himself and a significant part of his resources to build many schools and subscribe to a plethora of newspapers at a time when the survival of the regime was rather precarious.

Once we recognize the possibility that Liu Nengchao and his literati contemporaries in Xiaofeng might have shared some understanding of politics that is very different from ours but still entirely reasonable in their own context, the establishment of Private Xiaofeng Zhongzheng High School (*Xiaofeng si li Zhongzheng zhong xue* 孝豐私立中正中學) in 1941 acquires a political meaning that extends beyond absorbing the increasing numbers of elementary graduates.³⁵¹ The high school represented the culmination of legitimate government recovery in Xiaofeng. It would be difficult to deny that Liu Nengchao's personal reputation and connection with local literati must have in part facilitated the birth of this educational institute. The high school was funded by the local gentry, whose generous donations surprised many witnesses.³⁵²

³⁵⁰ With this understanding, it is proper to say that the comments given by Liu's authorities praising "the relationship between the administration and people was sound," "the administration in Xiaofeng has democratic spirit" and "valuing both spiritual and regulatory leadership" are definitely not pure flattering words. See ZPA L033-001-0627 "Changhua jing ji, Tianbei zheng zhi de shi ping pan, xue shu de dan sheng, Tianbei min zhong kang zhang shi lue," 240-241, 297.

³⁵¹ I am definitely not denying that the establishment of high school bore administrative concerns. As indicated in a report made by the Lanxi county government, because of the enforcement of the New County Framework, the need for local functionaries was substantively increased. Meanwhile, those primary schools required by the New County Framework did generate a real desire among elementary graduates of upward mobility. As a result, the Lanxi county government also suggested to enrich the short-term normal school of the county into a formal high school that could provide either qualified candidates for amplified administration or quota to absorb those people who wanted to improve their educational background. See ZPA L029-001-0846 "Yiwu xian yi zhou nian xian zheng ji yao, Lanxi xian xian zheng wen ti gai jin yi jian shu" (The First Anniversary Brief Record of Yiwu County Administration, The Improvement Suggestion of Problems of Lanxi County Administration), 82.

³⁵² Many sources indicated that the mushrooming primary schools in Xiaofeng were also mainly funded by

Moreover, through the local literati network, Liu Nengchao was able to invite the famous Xiaofeng-born scholar and member of the children's education avant-garde, Fang Bingxing, to be the principal of the high school. Fang's greater reputation, in addition to the chairman of the school board's co-operation, Chen Li, who was also a Politics School graduate and a deputy of Liu Nengchao, made the Zhongzheng high school a hub of regional education within a short space of time. This personnel arrangement wisely emulated the tradition of putting an official representative under the command of talented scholar, which itself was a time-honored gesture of using respect for scholarship to revive the legitimacy of a regime. It is true that these measures could add little by way of concrete strength to the administration. However, in eyes of those who had experienced the painful chaos of war, what happened in Xiaofeng delivered an inspiring message. As a refuge teacher and guerilla organizer expressed in his poem, the insistence on the progress of education was "the beauty of Xiaofeng's humanistic politics." (*Xiaofeng ren wen zheng zhi zhi mei* 孝豐人文政治之美)³⁵³ Meanwhile, it would be a big mistake to assume that this humanistic politics was only of symbolic and secondary influence within the realm that we call modern politics or administration. The following fact should not be forgotten: capable as he was, Liu Nengchao preferred to set the fiscal base of his county government almost entirely on transit dues and the unusual source of gentry donation, rather than enforce an entirely feasible land compilation campaign that could have definitely brought in a politically reliable income.³⁵⁴ His reluctance to "modernize" his land taxation system was such that he convinced his supervisors of the enduring value of the existing Qing tax collection practices, which relied on non-official and hereditary tax farmers (Here, we can sense the influence of Liu Nengchao's

properties of local gentry. ZPA L033-001-0754 "Ge xian gong zuo bao gao" (Working Reports of Counties), 71.

³⁵³ Wang Wei ed., *Xiaofeng zhi gao*, 254. Also see http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_66b8a2a90101ald4.html

³⁵⁴ While the major fiscal resources came from gentry donation, Liu Nengchao could still gather almost 100% of the land tax quota. This is another fact indicating Liu's political capacity. ZPA L029-001-0981 "Zhejiang di er qu xing shu san shi yi nian du shang ban nian shi cha bao gao," 31.

experience in Lanxi). Considering that the very goal of the finance education Liu Nengchao had received at the Politics School was to get rid of this pre-modern inefficient tax farming system, Liu Nengchao's blatant violation of these rationalization principles can hardly be seen as an outcome of mere ignorance.³⁵⁵ In this regard, the humanistic politics were the very reason why Liu Nengchao did not, and could not, follow a more regular and rational approach when it came to building his "modern" administration.

Such a humanistic politics were probably not practiced by Liu Nengchao alone. He Yangling commented on Xiaofeng's politics: "in present day China, the rule of human beings seem much more crucial than rule of law."³⁵⁶ This comment was not just a compliment. He ordered the establishment of an academy of classic learning, the Tianmu Academy (*Tianmu shu yuan* 天目書院), and summoned a group of senior Confucian scholars and literati to preserve the "primary energy" (*yuan qi* 元氣) of the Chinese nation. Even Dong Zhongsheng's "hardline politics" had their humanistic aspects. Dong Zhongsheng's report about the establishment of a new high school in Chahnghua provides us with another vivid case as to how seriously these administrators treated education. Instead of passively implementing the order from the top, Dong Zhongsheng actually pleaded with the authorities to let him build a high school that would require no support from the province or the Acting Office because the school would be mainly financed through its own property, as acquired from public and private donators. To strengthen his appeal, Dong Zhongsheng listed all high schools near Changhua and noted how far they were from the county. Very interestingly, he neglected to mention the high school newly established

³⁵⁵ ZPA L029-001-0926 "Xiaofeng, Jinyun, Songyang, Shuian, Tangxi xian zheng fu nian du bao gao" (Annual Reports from Xiaofeng, Jinyun, Songyang, Shuian, Tangxi County Governments), 12.

³⁵⁶ ZPA L033-001-0627 "Changhua jing ji, Tianbei zheng zhi de shi ping pan, xue shu de dan sheng, Tianbei min zhong kang zhang shi lue," 297.

by his strong competitor Liu Nengchao.³⁵⁷ Dong Zhongsheng's fierce desire to build a high school in his own jurisdiction once again reflects certain aspects of a politics that was unfamiliar for people living in a world dominated by techno-scientific ideals.

These phenomena compel us to rethink what modern administration and politics meant to Central Politics School officials like He Yangling, Liu Nengchao, and Dong Zhongsheng. It would be very unconvincing to simply state that their efforts were just instances of collective bureaucratic obedience designed to meet the unscrupulous cravings officials had for unrealistic grandiose endeavors or personal fame. As we have seen in above passages, these capable officials did not lack a sound sense of reality. They proved themselves capable of handling, utilizing, and interpreting the very real and inexorable requirements of modern politics, both discursively and practically. All things considered, these endeavors and measures, which were apparently unfit for the perceptual framework of Western modern politics, should be seen as equally real and inexorable to the needs of Chinese politics. Nevertheless, one should not simply put these non-modern facets into the category of incorrigible residuals of Chinese culture or "traditions." As discussed above, these traditional "residuals" existed in dialectical relation with elements of modernity. They were the hybrids that were formed by, and acted in the forming of modernity. One simply needs to imagine whether or not educational and cultural endeavors could have acquired such an important position, had it not been for the double pressures of the Enlightenment discourse and the competitive nature of the collaborative regime. However "traditional" or "antiquarian" the endeavors of Liu Nengchao and his literati seem to modern people, whose understanding of politics is meant to exclude humanistic factors, they were considered by the participants to be an integral part of the war effort. Moreover, that these

³⁵⁷ L032-000-0899 "Changhua xian li chu zhong zhi she li" (The Establishment of Changhua County Junior High School), 17.

activities could be financed to such a high extent was due to a very modern form of economic manipulation that was at least partially stimulated by the need to revitalize a cultural and ethical politics.

This is not to say, either, that humanistic politics were a necessary outcome of modernity. On the contrary, there was an enduring tension between indigenous versions of politics and the ones inspired by Western discourse and practice. There was always a hegemonic modern narrative, which haunted administrators. In refusing to bow to its dictates, they had to convince both themselves and the people, who tended to view the Chinese administrative experience as a suspicious deviation from the legitimate and orthodox paradigm of rational bureauratization as based on the scientific Enlightenment. Under the shadow of this hegemony of modernity, Chinese administrators were often forced to rewrite their understanding and experiences into something that was more acceptable to the mainstream of the time. That is why Dong Zhongsheng could not admit his trading fair conscription to the executive powers. It is also probably why Liu Nengchao chose to keep silent about his struggles with the New County Framework and the broader ideology of public administration. In a sense, administrators, like Liu Nengchao, Dong Zhongsheng, and probably also supervisors like He Yangling, were Don Quixotes, fighting against an invincible windmill of techno-scientific modernity. Even though they did win individual victories over the hegemony of modern doctrines, in general this kind of fighting against a widely accepted hegemonic conceptual framework was meant to be exhausting and counterproductive.

Conclusion

After four years of hard combat against all kinds of administrative challenges imposed by both the enemy and the Nationalist's modernizing requirements, Liu Nengchao, at age 34, was struck by a heart attack in 1943 and had to resign the following year. At roughly the same time, Dong Zhongsheng could not resist the allure of fulfilling his dream of professional land administration, and left the stressful Changhua for another experimental county of land administration in the rear zone. Although the positions these two capable officials left were both taken over by their Central Politics School colleagues, who continued to work on the foundations Liu and Dong had built up until the end of war in 1945, the tension between the Chinese administrative reality and the imagination of modernity still troubled these successors. After Liu's leave, Xiaofeng was soon attacked and occupied by another enemy in late 1944 - the troops of Chinese Communist Party. The Communist occupation lasted until the end of war, and severely sabotaged Xiaofeng's administration. Chen Li, who witnessed the demise of what Liu Nengchao (and, indeed, himself) had worked so hard to erect, spoke with great frustration in a local retrospective meeting right after the war in 1945. He candidly pointed out that the most serious problems troubling the Chinese county administration was its blind pursuit of institutionalizing every government task and function. While it might superficially satisfy the rationalizing imagination, this tendency actually sapped both resources and personnel that could be put to better effect on other missions. Chen Li argued, therefore, that the county government should not be deprived of the discretion to divert its budget towards the most needed tasks.³⁵⁸ As Liu Nengchao's most trusted aid, Chen Li's opinion was presumably shared by the former

³⁵⁸ ZPA L031-001-0747 "Zhejiang sheng san shi si nian du quan sheng xing zheng hui yi tao lun zhi zhong xin wen ti" (Central Issues Discussed by the 1945 Zhejiang Provincial Administrative Meeting), 61-69.

magistrate of Xiaofeng. Had Liu Nengchao been given the choice, he might have not established so many institutes to simply meet the New County Framework's requirements. Similarly, he likely would have furthered his "humanistic politics" to cunningly improve the quality, rather than quantity, of primary education in Xiaofeng. Unfortunately for Liu and other Politics School officials, they lived in a time when discourses of science and a specific kind of rationality occupied the center of the political landscape. Their work was meant to be on the margin of this landscape. Are the political innovations that these atypical modern bureaucrats participated in, therefore, but marginal illustrations on the long painting scroll of Modernity? Did they not, after all, just play out a technically fresh but thematically stale drama on a stage that was built upon those pillars of modern principles?

The answer is both yes and no. When Dong Zhongsheng organized his women's training, it is true that many modern resources, such as female students, women's rights, and concepts of the modern state, were being put to use. From this point, women's training in Changhua was a locally assembled Western product. It contained Chinese characteristics and materials, but its patent belonged to the West.

On the other hand, as the details of Changhua's story indicates, the training could only work because of indigenous elements that had little, if anything, to do with Enlightenment ideals like the liberation of woman, nationalism, or social engineering, which in China actually inhibited rather than facilitated the appearance of modernity. Women acquired an unprecedented degree of political participation, not against a backdrop of bourgeois cosmopolitan but a lately formed internal frontier society, which was atypical even within the context of modern Chinese history. In a similar vein, Liu Nengchao, equipped with modern knowledge and techniques of financial leverage, built a new county according to discursive and practical requirements of modern state.

However, the administration in Xiaofeng would probably have been much less “modern” and effective had Liu Nengchao eliminated all pre-modern and non-modern factors, including, among others, the literati and their ideologies. The reason Xiaofeng became the model of the entire West Zhejiang region lies not so much in the county’s accordance with modern principles of public administration, as in their violation. Furthermore, Liu Nengchao’s manipulation and combination of both “modern” and “traditional” methods compels one to question whether a rationalization project that ultimately has a non-modern and humanistic goal actually stands to fulfill the requirements of modernity. In these cases, orthodox Western ideals and techniques, at best, comprised only a section of the bricks that formed the mansion of China’s political modernity. On occasion, it is even possible to say that the fascination with the Western blueprint did more harm than good in the construction of this mansion.

As a result, we have to admit that Bruno Latour is right. Modernity is consisted of hybrids that contain both modern and non-modern elements.³⁵⁹ This argument is not only true in the realm of science and technology studies, but holds true for the world of politics as well. As the cases in this chapter indicate, modernity could never be fulfilled without the presence of non-modern factors. In this sense, the dichotomy between the modern and non-modern does not seem clear or fixed. We can sense in Liu Nengchao’s humanistic politics that an indigenous cultural and human conceptual framework actually had the potential to just to assist in the formation of political modernity, but also redefine (if not replace) the content of politics in our modern understanding.

To further explicate this point, in the next chapter I discuss an administrative modernization policy that lead to a revival of the pre-modern imperial practice of frontier management. Such a

³⁵⁹ Bruno Latour, translated by Catherine Porter, *We Have never been Modern* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991),.

political act of “modernization” was still shaped by graduates from the Central Politics School, and occurred in Guizhou, a much more primitive frontier province. Guizhou had a high proportion of ethnic minorities, and was far away from the more economically advanced areas of coastal China where modernity had first been introduced. Acts of administrative rationalization, such as the equalization of citizenship sponsored by public administrators, led to the “barbarization,” or the intensification of tribal and ethnic conflicts in this frontier society. On the contrary, pre-modern Confucian ideology and tactics significantly reframed the political goal, and in reality undergirded some substantive innovations on the part of the administration.

Chapter Three

From Administrative Science to Modern Chinese Statecraft

In previous chapters, we have seen how public administration, a new scientific discipline born in the young US, was introduced to Nationalist China where it became the dominant paradigm within administrative theory and practice. We have also discussed the unrealistic scientific assumptions of public administration, and the corresponding deviations from the discipline's orthodox approach as put to practice by some Central Politics School field officials. Those chapters have served to explain why impersonal and science-like public administration was infeasible in China, and how, on some occasions, a more intimate comprehension of humanistic elements turned out to be more central than the rationalization of bureaucracy or so-called "institutional breakthroughs" in forming effective governance, but how we should evaluate the meaning of the human dimensions in administration remains unclear. It is tempting to conclude that humanistic elements have some, or even an indispensable degree, of importance in regards to smoothing over the rigid operations of a highly machine-like administration. By this reading, their status is just like the function of machine oil in an engine. An engine needs machine oil, but machine oil is only useful when it actually participates in the operation of machine. This conclusion has been widely propagated by modern scholars, whose critiques on high modernism have been very profound. Nevertheless, techno-scientific politics, however problematic, has remained irreplaceable as a conceptual framework for anyone who wants to understand modern states and their political realities.

It is certainly the case that the socioeconomic complexities generated by huge populations and various technologies seems to make it increasingly unrealistic for governmental

administration to follow any other route than rational bureaucratization, where human variety must be inhibited so that effective coordination among work of individual units across a wide temporal and spatial span might be maintained. As a result, the extent to which humanistic dimensions are decisive in framing the administrations of modern states is still a theme that is largely understudied. Even though the previous chapters have demonstrated the limitations of public administration and the techno-scientific political understanding that undergirded the legitimacy of the discipline, we still need to ask ourselves whether the overall picture of politics and governance in Nationalist China could have been different because of the aforementioned heterodox examples. In these cases, individual Central Politics School officials demonstrated that non-scientific human elements mattered in some circumstances. This is not, however, sufficient to directly overturn the argument that an objectified political reality shaped and endorsed by scientific percepts is indispensable. While the administrations of Liu Nengchao and Dong Zhongsheng had a cultural and human core, as indicated in the final part of the last chapter, and this, to certain degree, influenced how these capable officials distributed their resources and evaluated the effects and the value of their endeavors, did those human ingredients fundamentally change the basic requirements of modern administration? No matter how committed Liu Nengchao was to literati morality, or how central the establishment of a high school was to Dong's self identity, the overarching political reality in which they tried to preserve some "characteristics" or "preferences" could still be the one that was increasingly sustained by the rational application of non-human scientific and objectifying powers. As such, what Liu and Dong did might have been mere anecdotal exceptions from Nationalist China's general failure to establish and maintain a modern political milieu. An orthodox public administration, with its high modernism and scientism, may not be a good fit for local

governance. Although with some necessary adjustments, for many of the Central Politics School officials, scientific politics still provided the most useful discourse and set of practices when it came to handling their political realities. Considering that numerous ordinary local officials did not show any intention of developing alternative administrative approaches, the fact that a few talented officials did, whether inside or outside the Central Politics School, does not seem like solid counterevidence against the legitimacy of techno-scientific politics. Some might even argue that the smart adaptations of public administration by some talented Central Politics School officials simply sheds light on how Nationalist regime failed to cultivate more like Dong Zhongsheng and Liu Nengchao, whose efforts would have been critical to the viability of any political regimen. In other words, those “seeds of destruction” within Nationalist regime might not necessarily have grown into bitter fruits, had some Nationalist officials been able to find a way to keep them from sprouting. However, the definition as to what seeds are destructive in modern Chinese political history is still dependent on an explanatory framework structured by techno-scientific politics.

Was there really no way out techno-scientific politics? The purpose of this chapter is to discuss such a possibility. I will further explain how the potential of human understandings of politics lies not only in fulfilling the goals set by techno-scientific politics, but also through entirely reframing what people perceive as reality and problems. This chapter argues that the problem of techno-scientific politics was by no means just technical or implemental due to its poor understanding of the value of indigenous human resources in the administrative process. Rather, its predicament originated in problems and reality as it defined them, particularly the aspects that were meant to be insurmountable within its conceptual and practical framework. Human and humanistic dimensions were not simply some auxiliary lubricant to smooth the

running of the state machine. How the human dimension was fundamentally understood had the capacity to decide the success or failure of the following administration from the very beginning. Human elements, in this sense, were both driver and destination of the administrative vehicle. A good car can go nowhere if there is no one to drive it; a car can only be a car when someone actually relies on it to take them to a place.

This chapter comprises three sections. Section One sketches out the background to Guizhou, which became a wartime administrative virgin land for Central Politics School officials and their public administration. A successful case of the public administrative approach, as promoted by a Central Politics School county magistrate Xu Shipu (徐實圃), will be analyzed. The discussion of Section Two involves Guo Peishi and how the administrative approach he had developed in Zhenjiang Zhejiang (see the last section of Chapter One) evolved. The focus is on Guo Peishi's attempts to turn a savage Guizhou mountain county into a civilized society using discourses and methods that originated in the legacy of Chinese Statecraft. By reframing reality according to his Confucian discourse and practice, Guo Peishi was able to govern a place that had seemed entirely ungovernable for public administrators who depended on 'objective' social facts and resources. In Section Three, a large scale riot that exposed both the limitations of public administration and the efficacy of Chinese frontier statecrafts provides ample opportunity to rethink the value of non-modern administrative approaches inspired by Chinese imperial frontier statecraft and more classic assumptions of human nature. An excellent censor, Liu Shifan (劉時範), who acquired his intellectual resources and practical experience entirely outside of the Central Politics School and its public administration education, will be described in detail. He was intent on delivering non-scientific political wisdom and tacit knowledge to his Central Politics School subordinates, who were used to seeing reality far more "objectively" and

“rationally”. Finally, in the conclusion, I will explain why the particular backwardness of Guizhou does not form an excuse for the failure of public administration. Rather, it was the way public administration perceived the reality that determined its frustrations in both modern and non-modern contexts. The exceptionality of a few officials’ non-modern administration in geographically specific contexts, scientifically unrepeatable and unpredictable as though it is, rightly reveals the highly contextual, transitory, and human nature of politics and the consequential limits of scientific perceptions and methods.

Section One: The Promise Land of Public Administration

In early 1938, a visiting group formed by scholars from NanKai University and other institutes of rural reconstruction entered into Luodian (羅甸) county in Guizhou to start a two-week long inspection tour. Their main mission was to decide whether to establish an experimental county in Luodian, in southern Guizhou, or in nearby Dingfan (定番). Zhang Jinjian (張金鑑), a Party Affair School graduate who went on to become a professor at Naikai, was also in this group. He had a Stanford public administration education background and practical fieldwork to his name, as well as administrative experience in Jinning (濟寧), Shandong. By the end of the tour, Zhang Jinjian had noticed that the social order in this very remote mountainous county was maintained rather well, despite the fact it was a vast area with a small population, and thus an ideal environment for people who did not want to be governed. Zhang Jinjian asked the county magistrate, Lin Zuomei (林作梅), how his jurisdiction was so secure. Lin Zuomei, a first class graduate of the Central Politics School, replied straightforwardly:

“sincerely rely on the local powers to maintain the social order.”³⁶⁰ Lin Zuomei’s tactics actually had an ancient source in the book *Mencius* (孟子), in which the Confucian sage Mencius reminded rulers: “ruling is not hard; do not offend powerful families. (*Wei zheng bun an bu de zui yu jus hi* 爲政不難, 不得罪於巨室).” Mencius’ words reflect the transitional nature of Chinese politics in the 4th century BC, when the old feudal system was about to collapse but the new centralized kingdoms with their nonhereditary bureaucracies had yet to become well established. Against this sociopolitical background, Mencius argued that it was necessary for rulers to respect the opinions of his nobles, who remained the legitimate representatives of people and the foundation of the state. This teaching had become somehow outdated with the establishment of a highly centralized empire, where the aristocratic stratum had increasingly been made weaker by the emperor. For most of the imperial China era, this short sentence of Mencius, though it never ceased to be a practical motto for many official scholars who faced the reality of local governance, was not very politically correct in the orthodox Confucian discourse, which emphasized the absolute and just rule of the monarch over all equal subjects. Interestingly, by the Republican Era, with the decline of the strong central government and the rise of local autonomy, Mencius’ admonition, once politically-incorrect appeared to align more closely to the reality of local administration than it had done during the imperial time. Lin’s words, in a sense, were simply an honest confession for all of the Republican local administrators.

We do not know if Zhang Jinjian was satisfied with this strategy. We only know that after the inspection, Zhang Jinjian thought Luodian was too backward to be an experimental county. As a result, Dingfan was selected as the site of the new county administrative experiment. Later,

³⁶⁰ Zhang Cunwu, Zhu Hongyuan, Pan Luli interview, Lin Shuhui record, “Lin Zuomei xian sheng fang wen ji lu” (The Interview of Lin Zuomei), *Feilubin hua qiao hua ren fang wen ji lu* (*Interviews of Chinese Expatriate in Philinpine*) (Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 1996), 21.

Zhang Jinjian stayed in Guiyang for a couple of months, training Guizhou natives to be qualified county administrators according to his administrative professional experience.³⁶¹

The point of this story is not to argue that Lin Zuomei gave a wrong answer that was not appreciated by Zhang Jinjian. The story simply reveals an encounter between two seemingly disparate approaches, both held by Central Politics graduates, in Guizhou during the war. On the one hand, public administrators who withdrew from the occupied Jiangnan brought with them public administrative theories and principles, such as rationalization and efficiency, to Guizhou. In Guizhou, modern administrative coverage was extremely thin on account of primitive mountainous terrain, poor economic development, and continuous wars among local military strongmen. Guizhou, which was probably the final internal frontier in China, had only been administratively integrated into the Chinese empire as a province in 1413. Nevertheless, through the rest of the imperial and early Republican eras, huge areas of Guizhou (outside of a few walled administrative centers) remained in the control of non-Han indigenous tribal leaders, who were nominally appointed officials of the Chinese state but were in fact hereditary nobles. Due to the centuries-long acculturation policy of the Chinese state, by the late 1930s, the majority of these indigenous leaders had more or less become sinicized. They tended to have Han Chinese surnames, and were able to speak mandarin. Meanwhile, in Guizhou, there were over ten million people living in a 170, 192 km² area (larger than Illinois). The majority of this population was comprised of non-Han ethnic minorities, who could barely speak mandarin. Under the circumstances, it was inevitable that people like Lin Zuomei would have to make some adjustment in public administration in order to meet Guizhou realities.

Lin Zuomei was appointed as county magistrate of Luodian in 1936. Initially, this appointment was part of a central government military preparation for handling its rivals in

³⁶¹ Zhang Jinjian, *Mingcheng qi shi zi shu*, 222-223.

Guangxi. Before becoming the county magistrate, Lin had worked in Wuxing (吳興), Zhejiang, where the silk industry was highly developed. Therefore, Lin Zuomei's early administrative experience was in developing local industries within a well-commercialized society, which was not exactly a typical stage for a municipally-oriented public administrator. It was, however an endeavor that involved evolving a relatively modern economy with substantial support from human and material infrastructures, such as college educated personnel and business networks.

Luodian, in stark contrast, was a pre-modern society. People there still saw aircrafts as "divine birds" and prayed for their blessing when Lin Zuomei and a few of his classmates took office. Lin's initial authority was also not based on his official title, but on the magical power of curing he had acquired through giving malaria patients Shanghai-bought quinine injections. Simply put, it was impossible for Lin to bring this essentially 17th century world into the 20th century overnight by building a government according to the dictates of modern public administration. As a matter of fact, Lin had to save his own life before he could save those of his people from their backwardness. The county, just like many other counties in Guizhou, was dominated by various armed forces owned by the local strongmen. Respecting the authority of the county magistrate was definitely not part of their habit. In this situation, appointing local strongmen to maintain social order could not have been a more rational choice for Lin, who had only thirty guns that were in the possession of some policemen who themselves had complicated backgrounds and connections to the local society. According to Lin's memoirs, he heard that after the establishment of the Dingfan experimental county, many officially appointed scholar district chiefs were unable to maintain the social order. Some of them even failed to keep themselves safe. Thus in retrospect, Lin reaffirmed the sense behind his policy to entrust local

strongmen with the management of a society that was already being managed by them.³⁶² What happened in Dingfan was definitely a frustration for scholar-led public administrative reform, but that does not necessarily detract from the undoubted triumph of Lin's practice. The county administration was much more difficult than Lin's description. According to the Guizhou provincial archive, an inspector opined that Lin did want to do more things, but could not find a way out of his current predicament. As a result, the overall performance of the county administration remained mediocre.³⁶³ Compromising with the local reality did not guarantee the security of the county administration. Even Lin admitted later in his memoirs that he had almost been killed by local strongmen, who were dissatisfied with Lin's interventions in judicial affairs and the execution of their partners. But for the two submachine guns carried by Lin's private guards, he would probably have been shot by the county's policemen, who attempted to kill Lin on the road to Dingfan.³⁶⁴ Apparently, erecting a feasible county administration without any modern infrastructure involved very different problems to the case in Zhejiang. As we have seen in the previous chapter, wartime Zhejiang, however difficult it was under the pressures of the Japanese military, was by and large a developed society where the government could relatively easily acquire readily available resources and social and symbolic capital. In Guizhou, all these supporting resources were either extremely rare, or simply nonexistent. In order to understand the anachronistic appearance of public administration in Guizhou, one needs to know about Wu

³⁶² Zhang Cunwu, Zhu Hongyuan, Pan Luli interview, Lin Shuhui record, "Lin Zuomei xian sheng fang wen ji lu," 17-20.

³⁶³ Guizhou Provincial Archives (hereafter GPA) 8-2-533-00057 "Kong Fumin shi cha Dingfan Luodian Changzhai Mashun si xian jing guo bao gao 1938" (Kong Fumin's Report of Inspecting Dingfan, Luodian, Changzhai and Mashun 1938). According to the inspector's testimony, Lin had been unable to find people to take charge of the two sections in the county government for five months. Half of his staff claimed they were sick and refused to work for a long time. From this description, one can imagine the initial helplessness of the young Central Politics School magistrate in Guizhou.

³⁶⁴ Zhang Cunwu, Zhu Hongyuan, Pan Luli interview, Lin Shuhui record, "Lin Zuomei xian sheng fang wen ji lu," 23-24.

Dingchang (吳鼎昌 1884-1950), the chairman of Guizhou provincial government through most of the war, and his relationship to the Central Politics School officials.

In many ways, Wu Dingchang's early experiences were a representative of the Chinese intellectual generation that grew up at the juncture when the classic Chinese teachings were shaky, but the absolute authority of a modern knowledge based on science had not yet been fully instated. Born to a rich family of officials, Wu Dingchang showed a talent in classical learning and passed the *Shengyuan* degree in his hometown Chengdu when he was still a teenager. In 1903, the eve that the fading Qing dynasty formally cancelled the civil service exams that were based on traditional scholarship, the 19 year-old Wu passed the official exam to study abroad, and became the government-supported student learning Economics in Tokyo. He was so fascinated by this modern discipline that he kept himself from revolutionary politics in Tokyo, even though he had developed a friendship with the revolutionary leader Sun Yat-sen. In 1910, Wu Dingchang returned to China and was given the *Jinshi* degree by the court because of his excellent academic performance in Tokyo. He became a promising young Qing official, first serving in the *Hanlin* Academy and the Beijing School of Law and Administration, and then at the Great Qing Bank before the Republican era. After the Republic of China was born in 1912, Wu relied on his abilities, reputation, and good connections with both former Qing and Republican officials in Beijing's Central government to become the chief of the central bank, the Bank of China, and therefore the major financial official who controlled the circulation of national currency in early Republican era. Meanwhile, he invested in and ran the newspaper *Dagong bao* (大公報), which was probably the most influential newspaper through the entire Republican era. By the Nanjing decade (1927-1937), he was a nationally reputed banker and media magnate. Even so, Wu Dingchang did not hesitate to develop new personal connections

within the rising Nationalist regime. He soon successfully established some political channels that led him to the top authority Chiang Kai-shek, mainly through his friends in the Political Studies Clique (*zheng xue xi* 政學系). Wu's political ability and experience quickly won him Chiang's favor. As such, when the war broke out, Chiang entrusted Guizhou to Wu, which had become the most important strategic rear base directly controlled by the Nationalist regime. Wu Dingchang had a clear understanding of his mission: to turn this poorest of provinces into a reliable logistic hub in order to sustain the Nationalist's war effort against an enemy of much greater industrial and military power.³⁶⁵ From this short introduction to Wu Dingchang's career, it is clear that he had a remarkable comprehension of both traditional and modern knowledge. Wu Dingchang had been able to accumulate the various political, social, and cultural capitals that were necessary to his different positions under different sociopolitical contexts.³⁶⁶

Just like other members in Political Studies Clique, Wu Dingchang had no private followers. His personnel strategy was very similar to Huang Shaohong's, who also had no political praetorians, and it involved using people from all backgrounds and cliques as a way to both mitigate the other clique leaders and to find capable personnel to staff his own administration. Wu Dingchang used many Central Politics School graduates and officials for their political and educational backgrounds. As a result, Guizhou became a major, if not the only, province where Central Politics School officials had a province-wide influence. A typical example of the public

³⁶⁵ Political Studies Clique, though named as a clique, was actually a loose interpersonal patron network among a few capable officials, such as Chiang Kai-shek's sworn brother Huang Guo, Wu Dingchang, Yang Yongtai, Zhang Qun, and Xiong Shihui, who had accumulated rich political experience during the early Republican period and been famous for their administrative skills. For this reason, they were entrusted by Chiang Kai-shek who had had constant difficulty finding reliable and qualified high ranking officials within the politically inexperienced Nationalist Party to take various political and administrative positions. The major characteristic of Political Studies Clique was that all members in it were high ranking officials. These clique members had no interest in recruiting youth or low ranking civil servants as their disciples or subordinates. This political style was also the reason why Chiang trusted them because they would not threaten Chiang's political hegemony.

³⁶⁶ Wang Peng, "Wu Dingchang qi ren qi shi" (Wu Dingchang and His Stories), *Wen shi jing hua (The Refinement of Culture and History)* 12 (2003), 51-52.

administration hegemony was the province's Baojia Cadre Training Institute (*Baojia gan bu xun lian suo* 保甲幹部訓練所), which became the main source of capable provincial and county administrators. The institute was actually run by Zhang Jingjian, who also taught administrative management at the institute and was responsible for the evaluation of students' performances.³⁶⁷

In addition to the provincial level, at least one quarter of the 78 county magistrate positions in wartime Guizhou were held by Central Politics graduates. Wu tended to have high expectations in regards to the energy and potential of the young Central Politics School graduates, but was unsure if these college intellectuals really had the guts or talent to bear the hardships and handle the realities.³⁶⁸ Wu's strategy was to let these Central Politics School magistrates compete with the other officials who had been promoted from capable local clerks or recommended by other political forces.³⁶⁹ Central Politics School graduates were sent to counties around the province, taking positions either from their classmates or non-Politics School officials. If they performed well, they would be promoted to other counties and then on to higher positions. If not, they might be forced to leave the province, and relinquish their positions to other more competent officials. Through Wu Dingchang's "mechanism" of personnel management and promotion, during the war more than 70 Central Politics School graduates served as county

³⁶⁷ Although the final decision to appoint the magistrate remained held by Wu Dingchang, Wu seemed to quite appreciate the information provided by the evaluation form designed by Zhang. In this sense, one can say that Zhang Jiangjiang and his scientific personnel management had a huge influence on Guizhou's county administration in the early period of war. See Zhang Jinjian, *Mingcheng qi shi zi shu*, 292-293.

³⁶⁸ Liu Yongmao, "Wu xian sheng zhi li Guizhou de pian duan hui yi" (Some pieces of Memory of Wu Dingchang's Governance of Guizhou), *Zhuan ji wen xue* 203 (1979). Shang Chuandao, "Dui Wu Dingchang zhu Qian qi nian de hui yi" (My Memory of the Seven Years of Wu Dingchang's Guizhou Governence), *Guizhou wen shi zi liao xuan ji* (*The Selective Collection of Culutral and Historical Mateirals of Guizhou*) 31 (1992), 51. Bu Qingfang, "A Brief Record of Wu Dingchang's Guizhou Governance during the War of Resistance," *Wen Shi zi liaocun gao xuan bian: jun zheng ren wu shang* (*The Selective Collection of Cultral and Historical Materials: Miliary and Political Celebrities Part One*) (2002), 753.

³⁶⁹ Cao Yuansong, "Jiu meng suo ji" (The Trivial Reminiscence of Old Dream), *Gaochun wen shi zi liao* (*Cultural and Histoirical Matierials of Gaochun*) 8 (1988), 3.

magistrates in all corners of Guizhou.³⁷⁰ Therefore, unlike the situation in wartime West Zhejiang, the administrative experience of the Central politics School officials was more diverse in terms of human and geographic conditions. There were, however, two constant factors that shaped the basic figuration of county administration in Guizhou. The first, as mentioned above, was the overall backwardness of the province. The second, as I will go on to discuss in this chapter, was the administrative requirements embodied in the new county framework. Both constants limited the goals that magistrates could have, and the measures they could undertake. Moreover, they often imposed contradictory demands on to the magistrates. The mission to find a subtle balance between compromise and development was the main story line of the school's magistrates' adventures. Surprisingly, the principles and practices of public administration remained the major resource for the school's officials when it came to handling a reality that was very resistant to a scientized modern administrative approach. In some ways, public administration in Guizhou had an influence that even more profound than that of Zhejiang. The Central Politics School officials, except a few exceptions, were hard working, righteous, but not very brilliant administrators who were able to find alternative paths. I will explain in following passages of this section the roots of this weird phenomenon.

In a sense, Guizhou's backwardness provided public administrators with a blank canvas, upon which they could apply all ideal institutions and innovations. For example, the province had no bureau of land at the beginning of the war. But, within a few years, Guizhou's land administration had basically been monopolized by graduates from the Land Administration College at the Central Politics School.³⁷¹ They helped Guizhou complete a province-wide land

³⁷⁰ Xu Shipu, "Wo men zai Guizhou" (We Were in Guizhou), *Guo li Chengchi da xue (National Chengchi University)* (Taipei: Nanjing Publication Company, 1981), 348.

³⁷¹ In the end of 1937 when 15 Land Administration College graduates were introduced to Guizhou, provincial bureaucrats simply refused to give these graduates jobs and claimed that Guizhou had no need to hire this kind of

report, and significantly increased the income from land tax. Wu Dingchang's shrewd leadership gave administrators room to do what they thought necessary within a loosely defined legal and normative framework of officialdom. For the Central Politics School magistrates, Wu's non-interventionist approach was either an advantage or a burden. On the one hand, the provincial authorities rarely interfered with the concrete administrative measures of individual counties. In this situation, the county magistracy could be a free realm of personal agency. For instance, a Central Politics School magistrate reported that he was the first person to introduce waterwheel technology to his jurisdiction.³⁷² Such an opportunity to be the source of civilization was unusual, although undoubtedly desirable, for officials. On the other hand, Wu did not have an interest in reexamining or revising the necessity of national policies and institutions as promulgated by the central government. A shrewd politician as he was, Wu Dingchang knew there were always ways, for better or worse, to meet requirements from the top. He had told a magistrate:

Administration has only one principle: keep walking forward. Do not fall asleep. Do not sit or stand still... but don't forget "step by step." What local administration should avoid most is too many and frequent changes.³⁷³

Interestingly, these words were quoted by a magistrate as an explanation for why his county had been accused of poor administrative performance. The magistrate's apology had made some sense. During the war, except for provisional tasks such as corvee distribution and the raising of governmental bonds, administrative works such as education, tax collection, and interaction with other governmental apparatuses still needed to be carried out. A remarkable performance in one or two areas might influence the completion of administrative work as a whole. Enforcing

experts. These graduates were forced to stay in a small hotel in the provincial capital Guiyang for weeks without any support. Only after Chiang Kai-shek wrote recommendation letters to Wu Dingchang, did Wu order to give these "redundant" people, some of them had received undergraduate education in Beida or Qinghua, some position in departments that had nothing to do with land administration or measurement. GPA 1-1-2110, 20-45.

³⁷² GPA 8-2-118 "Ge xian xian zhang bao gao" (Reports from County Magistrates), 1.

³⁷³ GPA 8-2-591-2-5 "Zhuan yuan jian bao an ji lin" (Censor and Commander of Peace Reservation), 6.

everything, however, might simply lead to generally slow progress. There was simply no formula for the best county administration. As Li Shijia(李世家), a capable Central Politics School magistrate said, good county administration came from “no envy and no greed (*Bu jib u qiu* 不伎不求).” He meant that a county magistrate should not be driven by the desire of pursuing great and instant success. He should just do what he needed to do according to his own tempo.³⁷⁴ Li’s words might be right, but they were not very helpful for greenhorn officials who did not know their own direction or tempo. In this situation, many Central Politics School magistrates found that they were on their own when enforcing heavy administrative tasks. Among others, the enforcement of the new county framework turned out to be heavy work for them. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the new county framework was a fully institutionalized and rationalized administrative institution that intended to standardize the function and ability of modern county government. The framework was basically developed according to the experiences of more economically advanced counties. For Guizhou, where the administrative and educational infrastructure was poor, the new county framework meant an unprecedented degree of administrative expansion. As the magistrate of Zunyi (遵義), the most populated county in Guizhou, pointed out in a report, according to the framework the county had to bring 9040 staff into all levels of the county governmental units and the *baojia*.³⁷⁵ In most cases, Central Politics School magistrates, pressed by regulations and missions, only had limited options when it came to administering, even though their provincial supervisor was not meddlesome. Just like many other local officials, they were forced to play the game of digging out bricks on the eastern wall in order to fill holes on the western one. As indicated in a inspection report, the Central politics

³⁷⁴ GPA 8-2-591-2-5 “Zhuan yuan jian bao an ji lin,” 5-7. Li Shijia, “Wo de xian zheng jing yan” (My Experience of County Administration), *Fuwu* 8:3 (1942), 10.

³⁷⁵ GPA 1-1-1145 “Guizhou sheng jiao yu bao gao ji Zunyi xian zheng” (The Report of Guizhou Education and Zunyi County Administration), 332.

School magistrate Sun Xueping (孫雪屏) found it very difficult to inspire his badly paid and sluggish employees, no matter how hard he had tried. All he could do was to take over administrative jobs from his inert staff and do everything by himself.³⁷⁶

It does not to say that county magistrates within the new county framework could not do anything. By using their limited financial sources smartly, some of them found ways to improve the state of local society and the administration. The Central Politics School magistrate Xie Jiemin (謝傑民) was among these capable local administrators. In an appeal sent by the Tianzhu county council to the provincial authorities, the county council stated that they hoped the province would let Xie stay in the county for a longer time, because Xie had proven himself capable of developing the local economy and managing the logistics of a big army being stationed there without increasing the burden on the people.³⁷⁷ This source indicates that Xie was indeed an administrative and financial expert who could find a balance between numerous tasks.

Nevertheless, in general the sparsely populated province imposed special difficulties on the county administration as envisioned by the new county framework. Public administrators, who had designed the new county framework, imagined a society divided up into the identical smaller administrative baojia units. They expected these artificial units to be formed according to decimalization, which would turn countless disorganized individuals into disciplined members of the administrative units to which they belonged. As I mentioned in Chapter One, the idea of governing the society through baojia, despite their Chinese traditional roots, had been very attractive for public administrators who dreamt of the full rationalization of the human world. Idealistic as the idea was, it was still more or less enforceable in the densely populated provinces

³⁷⁶ GPA 8-2-531 “Zhuan yuan dai biao xun shi bao gao 1942” (The Inspection Report of Censor Representatives 1942).

³⁷⁷ GPA 8-2-145-201 “Ren min chen shu xian zhang zheng ji, Tianzhu Xian, 1945 San yue” (The Administrative feat of County Magistrates Described by People, Tianzhu County, March 1945).

where transportation infrastructures and closer economic connections among communities and households tended to be better developed. This, however, was not the case in Guizhou. Communities in Guizhou were scattered across small flat courts (*Ba zi* 壩子) amid rugged mountains that were separated by deep ravines. Even if two villages were only a few hundred meters from each other on a map, it could take hours, or even days, to send a message from one place to another if there was no direct road or bridge connecting the two places. These special geographic conditions led to enclaves, another special administrative phenomenon. Influenced by the difficult terrain, cross-community identities tended to develop among villages that had actual economic and family connections, rather than among those who had a spatial proximity. Put differently, as seen from a map, a village might share its political and economic life with other villages that were not adjacent to it. Similarly, two villages, even though they were close to each other on a map, could be totally irrelevant to each other in real life. In this situation, as the reputed Qing Guizhou governor Hu Linyi (胡林翼, 1812-1861) described, the historical consequence of these special sociopolitical groupings was that a county in Guizhou tended to be formed by one (or a few) former tribal leagues, which contained several communities on disparate flat courts that had subdued themselves to the Chinese state collectively after a campaign. Consequently, jurisdictions over the different counties had formed over a long process of state expansion, which often overlapped with one another and thus gave rise to many enclaves.³⁷⁸ Throughout the Qing dynasty, the Chinese state only pursued a limited rationalization of county jurisdiction and the elimination of enclaves because of fiscal shortage, and more importantly, the administrative reality. The county administration in Guizhou simply could not be managed from a bird's-eye view, which was exactly what the modern West and its

³⁷⁸ Hu Linyi, *Hu Linyi ji (The Collection of Hu Linyi's works)* 4 (Changsha: Yuelu Academ, 2008).

Chinese Republican emulators intended to do. Certainly, by relying on modern technologies such as telephones, motorways, and automobiles, geographic isolation could sometimes be reduced. However, the distance between human emotions, lifestyles, and identity, which had all been generated and consolidated over generations, could not. As a result, there was always human, and therefore administrative interstice, which could not be found on a map that presumed homogenous administrative coverage. Enclaves were but one among many other problems administrators faced in the ethnic frontier of Guizhou, where Han immigrant communities could be found just next to a lot of other ethnic minority villages. Living in the same space is one thing; being ruled by the same administrative unit is quite another. In this regard, the full rationalization of baojia within the new county framework turned out to be not so rational, at least not always, in Guizhou. As indicated in the archival sources, dividing into baojia meant the artificial integration of some formerly irrelevant, or even hostile villages, and the abrupt dissembling of some long-term connections. Through this process, local political and economic interests were inevitably redistributed, and new conflicts arose. To take the case of a bao in Pan county (盤縣) as an example, people in the bao that originally belonged to Shuixiu village (水秀鄉) were very unwilling to be reassigned to Guishun village (歸順鄉) after the implement of the new county framework, because they thought that Guishun village was a place full of bandits and local bullies while Shuixiu was cultured and civilized. They also complained that they had to walk a much longer distance to get to Guishun. However, from the perspective of county, the adjustment fit the decimalization process. From the fierce words, such as “we would rather die than be a part of Guishun,” there must have been some ingrained political and societal conflicts between the bao and Guishun, which were ignored by the county government.³⁷⁹ For a county

³⁷⁹ As a matter of fact, from the name of the two villages, one can make an educated guess that there were also some

government that had a nation-wide law to obey, it was simply impossible to check every individual bao's concrete situation.

Insomuch as the new county framework was at its essence not a proper administrative institution that could be used to regulate reality, many Central Politics School magistrates simply choose to do whatever they knew first. For example, the Yuping county (玉屏縣) magistrate Li Shijia reported from his ethnic minority jurisdiction:

Upon taking the office, I have emphasized most the development of personnel administration and the unfolding of endeavors. All institutions of personnel, finance, official document, file management and statistics have been established in the county government.³⁸⁰

From the content of the archives, we do not know how Li Shijia established these modern bureaucratic institutions in a county government where no single employee might have ever learnt about public administration. It is, however, clear that Li Shijia thought that establishing modern civil servant institutions was “an effective work” worth reporting to his supervisor.

In the face of nation-wide construction requirements, not all county magistrates could prioritize between their different orders very well. From time to time, they showed a poor sense of their county administration's main direction. As the Central Politics School magistrate Wang

ethnic reasons. In Chinese, the literal meaning of shuixiu is beautiful water, a common name, similar to Fairview used by Americans, for Han people to call their hometown. In addition, these people claimed that their village was on the flat land which was usually lived by Han immigrants. The name Guishun, on the other hand, has a military connotation meaning submission of a land or a group to the authorities. This kind of militaristic name usually appears in former ethnic frontiers which had been conquered lately by the Chinese state. Therefore, people in Guishun tended to be original ethnic minority residents or descendents of the army. Both groups were not famous for their comprehension of high Han culture. Therefore, one can imagine why people in Shuixiu did not want to be administered by those “barbarians” in Guishun. GPA 8-2962-62-63 “Ge xian hua fen xiang zheng de bao gao” (Reports of Dividing Villages and Townships in Counties), 1-3. GPA 8-2962-79 “Pan xian xian zheng fu chen” (The Memorial of Pan County Government), 1. GPA 8-2962-83 “Pao san cong e shi si bu cong kan qi” (An Sincere Appeal of People Who Would rather Die than Be Abandoned by the Good and subdumed to the Evil), 1.

³⁸⁰ GPA 2-1-118-24 “Ben xian nei you xiao gong zuo zhi chen shu Yuping xian zhang Li Shijia” (The Descripoin of Effective Works in the Juridication, Yuping County Magistate Li Shijia).

Mingyi (王明義) reported in 1940, only a few months after his taking office in Shiqian county

(石阡縣):

As for the general construction this year, about 13300 *mu* of forest has been grown. Because of the severe drought, only 79000 trees are still alive... As for health and hygiene, two hot spring pools and one toilet have been built. Two hygienic examination movements have been launched. So has one athletic meeting....³⁸¹

According to the comments of an inspector, the new magistrate Wang seemed to be a smart, capable and pragmatic official who lacked only in indomitability.³⁸² In this regard, his pointless report might reflect a real sense of powerlessness in the face of a chaotic administrative reality. In fact, this kind of depressed report was not rare among Central Politics School magistrates. Sometimes, because of the conditions of their counties or the limits of their own abilities, important and effective measures were not always implementable when a routine administrative investigation needed to be filed.

Against this background, the performance of the Central Politics School magistrate Xu Shipu (徐實圃) appeared to be very impressive.

Xu Shipu graduated from finance section in the department of finance and completed his internship at the Central Bank (*Zhong yang yin hang* 中央銀行), and would had become a banker had he not been called by the Central Politics School authorities to serve in Guizhou in 1936. He and Lin Zuomei were among the first thirteen Central Politics School officials to enter and work in Guizhou. In no time, Xu Shipu was appointed as the county magistrate of Guiding

³⁸¹ GPA 2-1-118-8-9 “Ben xian nei you xiao gong zuo zhi chen shu Yuping xian zhang Li Shijia” (The Descripoin of Effective Works in the Juridication, Shiqian County Magistate Wang Mingyi).

³⁸² GPA 8-2-531 “Zhuan yuan dai biao xun shi bao gao 1942.”

(貴定), a relatively stable county of 100,000 people and 6300 km², 70 km southeast of the provincial capital Guiyang (貴陽).³⁸³

Only a week after he took the office, Xu Shifu's demands for efficient administration had made his county staff deliver their collective resignation. Twenty years later, Xu Shipu admitted that he had ignored the special situation in Guizhou. He asked all his staff to get up very early. However, his Guizhou employees only ate two meals a day. They were not in the habit of eating breakfast, and therefore tended to have no energy if they got up early. Moreover, most of them did not have cotton clothes, which were not common in Guizhou, and thus had to endure the early morning chill of the highland province. In this situation, Xu Shipu in fact pursued a very inhuman course, which forced his staff to be hungry and cold just because of a kind of lifestyle that was supposed to be universally good for administrative efficiency.³⁸⁴ Nevertheless, Xu was not intimidated by the collective action of his staff. He insisted on promoting his more efficient ways of documentary processing, archival management, and rearrangement of office interior. At last, those old employees were subdued by his indomitable efforts to rationalize the administrative process.³⁸⁵

Ever since, the main line of Xu Shipu's story always seems to be a triumph hymn to an active and rational administrator. In his years at Guiding, Xu Shipu basically transplanted the county administrative model that was applied in Jiangsu and Zhejiang. The land report was held. New schools and offices were built. Xu was especially proud of the introduction of a steel plant into the county. Upon hearing that a state-run steel plant in Hunan needed a place to avoid enemy

³⁸³ Xu Shipu ed. *Guiding yi lan (An Overview of Guiding)* (Taipei: Chengwen Press, 1974), 5.

³⁸⁴ Xu Shipu, "Wo ru he zuo xian zhang" (How I did as a County Magistrate), *Fuwu* 5 (1939), 20.

³⁸⁵ However, in early 1938 when the newly arrived provincial charman Wu Dingchang inspected Guiding, the spirit and behavior of county governmental employees gave Wu a very bad impression. For this reason, he ordered to give Xu Shipu a demerit. Could it be a revenge of those county employees? GPA 1-1-1421 "Zhu xi xun shi Guiyang ji dong xi lu ge xianzheng shi" (The Chairman Inspect Administration of Guiyang and Counties in Eastern and Western Circuits).

bombing, he immediately contacted the plant and promised to provide enough land for the relocation. Relying on the new data generated from the land report, Xu was confident that Guiding could meet the needs of the plant. Soon, the steel plant was relocated in Guiding. The authorities of the plant kept their promise to hire Guiding workers and to buy up Guiding raw materials first. In so doing, Xu Shipu became a kind of predecessor to the entrepreneurial local cadre in the PRC.³⁸⁶

The steel plant is only one example that indicates how Xu Shipu's modern finance education background helped him grasp the opportunities caused by the wartime boom in Southwest China. With the fall of the eastern coastal provinces and ports, the Japanese invasion had made it impossible for hinterland provinces like Guizhou to acquire cheap and high-quality foreign commodities, such as cigarettes and machine-made clothes. However, the war had brought in a huge population of refugees, who had been used to a relatively urban lifestyle and introduced their consumption practices to hinterland China. In Xu Shipu's eyes, this refugee population also meant an increased presence of modern commodities in backward Guizhou. Xu Shipu must have observed this phenomenon through the rapid increase in the numbers of central governmental units which along with their employees and families evacuated into his once backwater county. His business brain soon noticed that Guiding's traditional tobacco agriculture had the potential to meet the demand for foreign cigarettes. The only problem was that he had to first convince the conservative Guiding tobacco peasants to grow a new American tobacco strain, rather than the aboriginal one that had been planted for generations. To dissipate the peasants'

³⁸⁶ Of course, the economic development always has its cost. After the plant was reestablished in Guiding, local residents began to protest that the noise of the plant broke the peace of their ancestors sleeping in a nearby tomb. Xu Shipu handled this "environmental issue" quite skillfully, at least in his own memoir. He told those protestors that because the type of their ancestors' tomb in geomancy belonged to "the tiger jumping across the stream." Such a type of tomb could bring fortune to the family only when the tiger was awakened. So, the noise of the plant actually helped the family because it made the "tiger" unable to sleep. Xu Shipu, *Cong zheng Liu ji (Six Stories of My Administrative Career)* (Taipei: printed by the author, 1956), 23-24.

fears, Xu Shipu mobilized all of his connections with the province, the banks, and other institutes, to provide cheap loans and fertilizer, to guarantee a higher price, and invest in the tobacco baking equipment. This audacious “industrial transformation” finally received firm support from the province-run Guizhou Enterprise Corporation (*Guizhou qi ye gong si* 貴州企業公司), which was established and supervised by Wu Dingchang. Guiding peasants began to grow American tobacco under close technical and financial supervision. The harvest in the first year doubled the previous year’s income. In following years, hundreds of small tobacco workshops mushroomed in Guiding, and other nearby counties that emulated Xu Shipu’s successful development model. Many people in Xu’s jurisdiction made a fortune from this wartime boom. Even today, tobacco production remains an important industry in Guiding.³⁸⁷

Probably inspired by this successful measure, through his five-year term in Guiding Xu Shipu kept himself busy developing his county. As a former banker, Xu Shipu thought it inevitable that taxes would have to increase if the county government wanted to meet the increasing number of administrative tasks. He and his chief of the section of finance, another graduate from the Statistics College at the Central Politics School, worked day and night to find reliable financial sources. They finally concluded that unless a new tax was imposed, there was no way for the county government to maintain a sustainable financial position. Xu decided to create the household tax (*Hu juan* 戶捐). The principle of household tax was simple: every household, according to the level of its income, had to pay a certain amount of money to the government. Even though there is no record of how he decided the tax level, Xu Shipu believed that he had taken into account the fact that different people could afford different amounts. This

³⁸⁷ Xu Shipu, *Cong zheng Liu ji*, 29-30. Li Zhaojie, “Hui yi wo zai Guiding he zuo shi gong zuo pian duan” (Some pieces of Memory of My Work in Guiding Cooperative Office), *Guiding wen shi zi liao* (*Cultural and Historical Materials of Guiding*) 3 (1985), 77-78.

new policy did solve Xu's financial problems, and it was soon adopted by the money hungry provincial government.

He applied his finance education to almost every aspect of the county administration. For instance, by managing to appropriate some idle money from grain accumulation, a kind of compulsory grain deposit that was widely adopted by local governments in case of famine, the Guiding county government was able to build and renovate a series of grass root offices and schools. In addition, partly because of real military demands, and partly because of his strong belief in development, Xu Shipu had no reservations about building a countywide road network. In his point of view, "it is pathetic for human activities to be limited by a mountain or a river." He must have known the cost of this infrastructure construction, and the burden he imposed on the people. Xu used words from the Legalist classic *The Book of Lord Shang* (*Shangjun shu* 商君書) to justify his mobilization of labor: "[An official] should not worry with small people in the beginning [of an endeavor] but can share the delight with them for the benefit [of that endeavor] (*Min bu ke yi yu lu shi ke yi yu lu cheng* 民不可與慮始, 可以與樂成)"³⁸⁸

Xu Shipu's administrative rationalization was so ambitious that he planned to solve the chronic problem of baojia household registration once for all with an administrative technique. Faced with the poor abilities of his largely illiterate baojia leaders to update the baojia household registration, Xu Shipu personally designed a kind of "real time" household registration update system. The system was basically a blackboard, on which all names of people in a bao were written on small wooden planks that were shown in corresponding showcase boxes. These small name planks could be moved into different boxes on the board to mark a birth, death, moving in, and moving-out. The name of a male would be written in red ink, while females would be green.

³⁸⁸ Xu Shipu, *Cong zheng Liu ji*, 26.

In Xu's mind, this visualized registration system could be operated by illiterate baojia leaders who could simply move the name planks and thus no longer needed to write down the latest household changes on paper forms. This household registration "machine," according to Xu's observation, functioned quite well. As a result, this advanced household registration system was promoted by the provincial government to all counties in Guizhou. Alone, Xu Shipu had invented two province-wide institutions.

The advantages of Xu's invention were obvious. For those baojia leaders who could barely write, such a system did enhance their ability to update the latest household status. The size and material of the registration bulletin board also made it less unlikely that household data would be missed or falsified, as in theory it could be checked by everyone. However, the flaws to this very scientific method were also undeniable. Baojia leaders had to be at least literate enough to recognize those words on the board, which could contain up to 500 names. Granted that many words would be repeated, it still required a level of literacy that was not common among baojia leaders. In addition, even if those bao leaders were willing to operate the household registration board, they still needed to rely on jia leaders and individual households to report the latest status to them, and it was here that the real difficulty of maintaining updated household registrations lay. Most people simply lacked the motive to walk to bao offices, which could be very far from a household in mountainous Guizhou. It was not unusual for people to take an hour, or even hours, to reach the nearest bao office. In this situation, expecting people to be cooperative was just impractical. Without their reports, the household registration board, however easy to operate, would remain useless. There were hundreds of thousands of bao in Guizhou. According to Xu's idea, each bao should have a board. Although the provincial government had the funds to buy enough

wooden boards of a standardized size and function, this expensive investment helped little in solving the problematic crux of poor household registration.

Xu Shipu's invention vividly reflected the logical limitations of public administration. The discipline always assumed that the rationalization of administrative procedure could bring efficiency and solutions to problems generated within human society. To achieve this goal of efficiency, public administrators tended to think it worth investing a huge amount of resources in order to reduce the hindrance of human factors. However, ultimately, whatever the system, method, or institution that had been invented, all these innovations could not work without the input of human beings. The input required by public administration, as indicated in Xu Shipu's design, was a highly standardized type that overlooked the complexity of reality and the factor of human motives. Human beings, in this case bao leaders, were basically expected to be identical robots that could be activated by similar drivers. Meanwhile, the space in which the entire system works must be devoid of other human variables, such as the varied unwillingness of people to travel a certain amount of distance and different levels of literacy. Such idealized human input was rarely fulfilled, if indeed it was ever achievable at all. So it was with the expected output of highly efficient administration. Nevertheless, there was no sign that Xu Shipu noticed the innate problems within this public administrative approach. He did gain some obvious benefits from the household registration board. Conscription in Guiding, according to his claim, was facilitated by the system.³⁸⁹ He would not come to realize the severity of the problems until the fall of **1942**, when he had been made the censor of the First Administrative and Inspectional Circuit in East Guizhou. Here, a society formed by ethnic minorities and governed by a non-scientific mode of rule would teach him a bitter lesson.

³⁸⁹ Xu Shipu, "Ban li Guiding bing yi de jing yan yu gan xiang" (The Experience and Thought of Implementing Guiding Conscription), *Fuwu* 1/2 (1939), 22.

Section Two: The “Noble Savage” in the Administrative World

While Xu was the Guiding county magistrate, another Central Politics School graduate had served as his section chief for one and a half month. This man was soon appointed by the provincial authorities as the county magistrate of Houping (后坪), and was no other than the former sub-county district chief Guo Peishi, who would develop a very different administrative approach that challenged Xu’s relatively orthodox public administration.³⁹⁰

Houping was a mountain county on the northeastern tip of Guizhou, with a border adjacent to Sichuan. There were about 50,000 people in Houping, living in an area of 3,675 km².³⁹¹ Houping had been a part of Wuchuan county (婺川縣) through most of the Qing dynasty. In 1884, the Wuchuan magistrate received permission from the provincial governor to establish a quelling commission (*Tan ya wei yuan hui* 彈壓委員會) in Houping to control the turbulent eastern area that lay far away from the Wuchuan county seat.³⁹² The name of this new unit revealed the nature of the administration in Houping, which eventually became an independent county in 1914. The new county seat was established on a fort-like, and therefore defensible, small basin formed by Karst topography.³⁹³ Relying on this fortified terrain, the Chinese government could still barely maintain its poor political existence in the county. The whole county was in a status of anarchy, where armed local strongmen had no respect for any law or

³⁹⁰ Xu Shipu, “Wo ru he zuo xian zhang,” 25.

³⁹¹ Guo Peishi, “Wu yue Houping zhi xian zheng” (Houping County Administration in the Last Five Months), *Fuwu* 6 (1939), 19.

³⁹² In fact, the social order in Wuchuan per se had already been in danger. The county government had to work in fortifications. See GPA 2-1-118-113 “Ben xian nei you xiao gong zuo zhi chen shu Wuchuan xian zhang Xiong Shaoru” (The Description of Effective Works in the Jurisdiction, Wuchuan County Magistrate Xiong Shaoru).

³⁹³ Tian Yongguo, Luo Zhongkun, *Wu jiang yan shang* (*The Tribulation History of Salt along Wu River*) (Guiyang: Guizhou Education Press, 2008), 64.

regulation. These mini-county warlords were so powerful that they had even been able to defeat the attack of the regular army with heavy weapon sent by the provincial warlord.

Under the circumstances, even the non-bandit (though it hard to define) Houping people either carried guns with them wherever they went or simply hid from anyone they did not know. One can only imagine how terrible the social order was in Houping. The notoriety of Houping was such that "[I'm] sending you to Houping" became a curse in Republican Guizhou with a very similar meaning to "go to hell."³⁹⁴ The administrative anarchy often spelled poverty for the economy. According to a witness who visited Houping in 1941, the backwardness of the county was so "unimaginable" that on the road he saw a young woman walking topless, and more than a half of the men did not have pants in the village where the county government located.³⁹⁵

Before Guo Peishi took the Houping office, there had been already four county magistrates, including Guo's immediate predecessor, murdered in the county since its establishment in 1914. Guo Peishi entered the county on December 5th 1938, at a time when the Houping county government was actually controlled by local strongmen who had killed the previous county magistrate sixteen days earlier.³⁹⁶

From the very beginning, Guo Peishi knew that even with his own pistol and provisional troops escorting him, his life could never be secure no matter the measures or defensive constructions he adopted. His strategy, therefore, was no strategy. The temple that had been

³⁹⁴ Guo Peishi, "Houping Shi zheng lu" (The Substantive Governance in Houping), *Fuwu* 3:4 (1940), 13.

³⁹⁵ Certainly, this kind of record can not be simply understood an unbiased observation of the county. The nudity might not be an evidence of poverty but a custom of ethnic minorities. According to the description of the county magistrate Guo Peishi in 1939, it seemed just natural for women in Houping to be topless even when participating in farmers' markets. However, from both Guo and the witness' other descriptions, the developing status of Houping in terms of economic level was undoubtedly very low. Binqiao, "Guizhou de dong bei jiao" (The Eastnorthern Cornor of Guizhou), *Nong ben (The Foudation of Agriculture)* 40/41 (1941), 28. Also see Guo Peishi, "Wu yue Houping zhi xian zheng," 19.

³⁹⁶ Jian Xueshi, "da shi ji yao" (The Brief Record of Major Events), *Wuchuan wen shi zi liao (The Selective Collection of Cultural and Historical Materials of Wuchuan)* 3 (1985), 73.

turned into his county government had no guards. He put everything, from his official seal to his personal property, on the desk and bed in his bedroom/office where everyone could come and visit him freely. Once again, he applied the tactic of conducting easy conversations with the people. To further facilitate this form of communication, for the first two months after he took the office Guo Peishi turned the county government into a clinic, where the county magistrate was literally a doctor who diagnosed patients and treated them with a combined form of Chinese and Western medicine free of charge. Through these means, Guo Peishi effectively achieved his goal of rallying the entire of Houping to the cause of his protection.³⁹⁷

This, however, was not enough. Unless people really felt obliged to obey his authority, Guo's actions would only made him look like a madman. Thus, in parallel with his easygoing attitude, Guo Peishi intentionally demonstrated his stern side. As if he did not know how vulnerable and isolate he was, Guo Peishi grabbed at a chance to go "suddenly mad" on the very first day, when he entered the county government to see all of his county government employees smoking opium. Smoking opium had been a common and inexpensive pastime for a significant part of population since the early 20th century, when opium became a major crop in Southwest China. Even though opium had been totemic of the national humiliation in the discourse of the Chinese modern state, in reality smoking opium in Houping was nothing more than a daily life practice. As such, punishing people for such an ordinary sort of fun could be thought of as very inhuman in the eyes of many Houping residents. Guo Peishi definitely knew this, but he still spanked the wrongdoers and prohibited them from smoking again. After that, Guo Peishi's anger was not sated. He made them all kneel down in front of the county government, so as to show his zero tolerance for any mischief. From that day on, Guo Peishi would punish any offender in his county government ruthlessly and openly. For example, he

³⁹⁷ Guo Peishi, "Houping Shi zheng lu," 16.

whipped the clerk who opened sealed official documents and kept them without his authorization, even though the behavior of the clerk had been as such for many years. This kind of public insult he dealt out to the county staff was definitely not a personnel motivation tactic commonly applied in public administration, which would never assume that barbarous forms of physical punishment would be a reasonable way to motivate in a civilized bureaucracy. As a matter of fact, it was a risky but carefully calculated political gesture to properly establish Guo's paternalistic authority among his subordinates and the ordinary people. The message Guo wanted to deliver was clear. He was a benevolent but strict father, whose authority came from unquestionable legitimacy of the Chinese state rather than some faraway and abstract idea of civil service. His actions can hardly be understood through the lens of science or realpolitik, because it was clear that Guo Peishi had absolutely no "objective" political or social backup that would guarantee the obedience of his undisciplined personnel. Guo Peishi knew his own vulnerability better than anyone. In a report he sent to the provincial government in late 1938, he pleaded with the provincial authorities to give him provisional peace force of at least a hundred men, until he could establish a permanent police force in the county.³⁹⁸ From this perspective, Guo's behavior was by no means an imprudent demonstration of some rigid but unrealistic

³⁹⁸ Compared to a little bit simplified and romanticized description in his article written for Central Politics School readers, the tone Guo Peishi reported to Wu Dingchang and the provincial authorities was much more realistic and bleak. He reminded Wu Dingchang that although there were 300 regular army temporarily deployed in the county. Both he and local strongmen knew this deployment would not last long. Once the troop withdrew, Guo Peishi had no blind optimistic estimation of his chance of survival. The report also indicates why Guo Peishi preferred chatting with people in his early days in the county. In some ways, Guo was forced to only give easy talks because he could not be too serious in front of people who could be imprudent revealers of the dark reality of the county once they deemed the magistrate could do things for them immediately. Guo Peishi informed the provincial authorities how painful he was when listening to people's sufferings but could do nothing because he knew the backup of the 300 regular soldiers would be too short to guarantee effective and enduring intervention with local problems. As a result, Guo Peishi had to be a two faced person who was a kind talker offending no one in public but a realist having a sober understanding of his weak political situation in private. See GPA 2/8-1-84-10-10 "Wei xiang cheng Houping bu zhi zhi yuan yin ji ni cheng zhi biao zhi ben ban fa wei qing he shi zhi zun you" (A Detailed Analysis of Reasons of Houping's Unrestness and the Way of Curing Temporary and Foundametnal Problems December 16th 1938), 3-4.

Confucian authoritarianism. Guo only spanked the subordinates who were relatively docile clerks, not the tough people who were not in the habit of observing official authority. Guo must have thought this through, and made the decision to teach his subordinates a lesson first. It was a gesture of “beating the dog in front of its master (*Da gou gei zhu ren kan* 打狗給主人看).” The point is not to abuse the dog (in this case, the county clerks who had long acquiesced to the arbitrary power of local strongmen over their official supervisor) but to send a clear but implicit message to the dog’s master (the local strongmen), in the hopes that they would discipline their dog (and themselves) if they indeed saw it necessary to respect the beater (Guo Peishi)’s will and power. In other words, this was a hidden dialogue between the county magistrate and local strongmen. Guo Peishi was telling those local strongmen something like: “Whether you like it or not, I am going to rebuild the county’s social order for everyone’s sake, in accordance with the authority and duty given to me by the state (therefore I do not hide my intention). Unless you think you can get rid of me once for all, following the order is the best policy for both of us.” This resolute, but unoffensive, solemn oath left open the possibility for cooperation, and assumed that local strongmen were capable of negotiating like gentlemen. It was because Guo Peishi had a good understanding of human nature and the local foundations of power that he was able to accumulate his political capital without substantive military or economic reinforcements. Of course, one may argue that Guo’s manipulation worked simply because he was lucky and stayed alive. Indeed, no one, including Guo Peishi himself, could guarantee that a repeat of the same action would lead to the same result. That is why Guo Peishi neglected any details of the preparation and timing of his action in an article he wrote to other Central Politics School students. His tactics simply could not be described in article form. It relied on subtle observation, and a comprehension that could only be acquired through everyday interactions with various

people. The last thing Guo Peishi wanted was for a Central Politics School graduate to follow his “instruction” word by word when dealing with another county’s problem. However, by not limiting himself to the narrow world of provable and repeatable truths, Guo Peishi had much more maneuverability than his orthodox public administrative classmates when it came to achieving his goals. This is what he really wanted to show to other Central Politics School students; and could there actually be a higher form of rationality?

For more than two months, Guo Peishi did not give any orders or promote any tasks. All he did was talk to people. This tactic, as he had previously tried out in Zhenjiang (see Section Four in Chapter One), won him a good reputation among the people and provided him with many valuable opportunities to gather first hand information about the local reality, which he could hardly gain through official channels. Through this method of collecting practical knowledge, by the end of 1938 Guo Peishi was already confident enough to propose a thorough analysis of Houping’s chronic state of disorder, while also providing technical as well as fundamental solutions. Guo Peishi pointedly argued that the crux of Houping’s problems was not because the county’s situation was essentially unique. Rather, Guo believed that it was mainly because of the maladministration of previous authorities. In Guo Peishi’s opinion, there had been a vicious circle in Houping that had led to lasting violence and anarchy. In a place where the government’s power was weak and society was unstable, people who needed to protect themselves had no choice but to be the skin family members (*pi jia ren* 皮家人) of local bosses (*Lao ban* 老板), who did have the power and capital to organize collective defense and economic activities.³⁹⁹ As such, a boss and his skin family members formed a kind of gang based around virtual lineage. To

³⁹⁹ It is not entirely clear that what skin family members means. However, one can infer from the context of the report that skin family members did not have blood relationship with their boss. They were more like armed serfs of a feudal lord. A probable explanation of the term may be that they were the skin rather than the core compared to the boss’s real family members.

protect themselves, people had to buy guns and build fortified villages. None of these needs could be met without sufficient money. In consequence, the easiest way to get money in a economically underdeveloped area was kidnapping, plundering other fortified villages (*tao ren da bao* 套人打堡), and most crucially, growing opium.⁴⁰⁰ “The benefits of working hard for three year are less than the gain of one plundering.”⁴⁰¹ This kind of “economic activity” made it even more necessary for people to have guns and forts, which in turn further stimulated the need for illegal fund raising. Against this backdrop, the previous county governments did not have the resolution or the resources to stop the vicious circle. On the contrary, most county magistrates choose to count on one or two of the most powerful bosses to maintain their nominal authority. Inevitably, official magistrates became puppets, and the bosses de facto local officials. Those powerful bosses were bound to keep on exploiting Houping society and expending their own power in order to maintain this favorable status quo. Any expansions led to conflicts and anger. Those out-of-office forces were constantly under threat from the ruling bosses, who tended to blame the nominal county magistrates for endorsing the unfair administration policies. It was for this reason that so many county magistrates had been killed.⁴⁰² One can see from this analysis

⁴⁰⁰ GPA 2/8-1-84-10-10 “Wei xiang cheng Houping bu zhi zhi yuan yin ji ni cheng zhi biao zhi ben ban fa wei qing he shi zhi zun you,” 1.

⁴⁰¹ GPA 8-5314-5-8 “Houping xiang zheng zao chan shi shi ji hua, Houping xian zhang Guo Peishi June 3 1940” (The Plan of Generating Village/Township Property, Houping County Magistrate Guo Peishi), 2.

⁴⁰² A close examination on archival materials of how the previous county magistrate Guo Changfan was murdered can help us better understand the special local political reality in Houping. Liu Shaoxiu, the main thug who was responsible for planning the murder, had been the secretary of another murdered Houping county magistrate. When his late supervisor was killed, Liu Shaoxiu was also wounded but rescued by a local strongman Yang Heshun. Later, Liu became a private teacher in Yang’s house and a confidant. With this local connection, Liu Shaoxiu was able to return to be section chief in the county government. After Guo Changfan took the office, Liu Shaoxiu became increasingly impatient with Guo Changfan who did not want to be manipulated by Liu and his local clique. Guo Changfan turned to another local strongman Tan Renshou who had been a foe of Liu Shaoxiu’s clique for support. Therefore, Liu Shaoxiu decided to terminate Guo Changfan and Tan Renshou’s influence once for all. He asked Tian Yingli, a bandit but also a *bao* leader (*bao zhang* 保長) who had a close tie with Liu’s clique, to enforce the murder. On November 19th 1938, when Guo Changfan summoned major local leaders including Tan Renshou to be present in a meeting held in the county government, Tian Yingli, as one member of retinue accompanying meeting participants, pulled out his guns shooting Guo Changfan and Tan Renshou in the end of

that in Guo Peishi's opinion, there were no innately evil people who were at cause for the pathetic situation of the county. All people in Houping were potentially willing to obey a fair government, if it would take on the responsibility of protecting the good guys. Underneath all of this "objective" analysis of sociopolitical causes is Guo Peishi's very Confucian assumption that everyone is good by nature. It was this assumption that made it possible for Guo Peishi to believe that no fundamental socioeconomic development was needed in order for the society to be appeased. It was not necessary to conduct a thorough rationalization and bureaucratization of the grass root administration, which would cost a huge amount of fiscal resources and first require the elimination of the "outlaws." As long as the government was willing to take correct and legitimate action, all people – including the local strongmen who had murdered so many officials - could become the allies, rather than the enemies, of the state. He did not mention how the bosses were to be rooted out, or their military capital stripped at a moment the provincial government was very likely to adopt an active military strategy against local riots.

Based on this classic analysis of the Confucian rule of virtue (*de zhi* 德治), Guo Peishi proposed his fundamental solution (*zhi ben* 治本). Besides supporting himself with a full-time military backup force of at least 100 soldiers for a year, the provincial government should also provide the county with 1200 yuan to initiate a small institute that would train indigenous elementary teachers and set up an elementary school. Guo's goal was to cultivate a small literate population within a year, and to appoint proper county and grass-root personnel from that pool.

the meeting. After Guo and Ren died, Liu Shaoxiu immediately took the seal of county magistrate and claimed that Guo Changfan had been murdered by Tan Renshou. Even though many people witnessed the whole process, no one dared to arrest Tian Yingli who could flee to countryside with his skin family members before the regular army escorting new county magistrate Guo Peishi arrived. However, Liu Shaoxiu apparently underestimated the political shrewdness of Guo Peishi. Within a few days, Liu Shaoxiu and his clique were trapped by Guo. It took Guo another five months to have Tian Yingli arrested. GPA 8-1-84-19-19 "Guizhou sheng di wu qu xing zheng du cha zhuan yuan gong shu cheng December 24th 1938 Cheng bao Houping shi bian xian zhang Guo Changfan bei hai xiang qing ji chu li jing guo" (The Censor of Guizhou Fifth Administrative and Inspectional Circuit Report the Details and processing of Houping Incident and the Murder of Magistrate Guo Changfan), 7-20.

Once the county had its own educated residents, now matter how few they were, the rest of the people would no longer be aimless sheeps who could not find any bellwethers other than bosses. After that, a modern state could emerge from within this pre-modern area.⁴⁰³

After acquiring the trust of the people and mustering up a group of students, teachers, and policemen who actually lived with him collectively in a disciplined way, Guo Peishi began to fulfill his political agenda and promote administrative works, although still in person rather than by official proclamation. Unless he had no other choice, Guo Peishi would not issue any official documents to his subordinates and people. He also asked his subordinates to minimize the number of routine records, reports, and forms sent to the county government. If document writing and delivering was inevitable, Guo Peishi prescribed that all documents must be written in the most simple and clear form, and contain only the necessary information.⁴⁰⁴ His policy was that everything should be done face-to-face if possible. For this reason, he invented a politics of farmers' market (*gan ji zheng zhi* 趕集政治), an administrative approach which used the opportunity of the periodical farmers' fair to deliver, explain, and enforce governmental policies. In this poor county where no regular market was sustainable, periodical farmers' markets were the only social event that people who lived in the scattered villages around the county were willing to participate in voluntarily. In the morning of farmers' market days, all local village leaders, school teachers, and clerks came to the county government, which was also the location of the market, to attend the countywide administrative meeting. This was the only meeting that Guo Peishi thought was worth convening every month. In the meeting, Guo would listen to all reports and give out all of the orders and notifications. Outside of the meeting, no documents would be sent between the county government and its grass root units. The meeting always

⁴⁰³ GPA 2/8-1-84-10-10 "Wei xiang cheng Houping bu zhi zhi yuan yin ji ni cheng zhi biao zhi ben ban fa wei qing he shi zhi zun you," 4-5.

⁴⁰⁴ Guo Peishi, "Houping Shi zheng lu," 16.

ended at 12 o'clock, just when the farmers' market was beginning. Guo Peishi took this chance to mobilize all his personnel resources to stand up on the stage, which was a real opera stage positioned right in front of the county government and at the center of the market fair. On the stage, Guo Peishi literally performed like a talk show host to explicate policies and answer questions raised by people who had come to the fair for the exchange of goods and entertainment. The spoken language Guo Peishi used was very simple, interesting and on occasion, even funny. He knew that if he wanted his policies understood and followed, he had to make people laugh. Apart from anything else, it was the most reliable way to know if people got understood what he had announced. In a similar vein, he let his students play out spoken operas and sing songs in order to amuse or educate people. All these shows were not only a kind of propaganda for policies, but also a frontier style of citizen assembly and mass education. Guo Peishi pointed out that it was extremely important to form a social consensus in this locale by openly praising the "good guys" who followed and promoted governmental orders, and shaming the "bad guys" who lost face and were punished. It could be the most effective way to prevent people from making the same mistakes. The most unique performance was written and designed by Guo Peishi himself, and took the form of a moralistic chorus.⁴⁰⁵ In this ethnic frontier mountain county where singing mountain songs had long been an important way of maintaining collective memory, Guo Pei's moralistic songs, which might have had little artistic value, had an unparalleled effect on people who were used to the sound of singing rather than written words. Luckily for us, some of these songs remain in a small pamphlet compiled by Guo Peishi and named *The Book of Being Human* (做人經). The title of the pamphlet delivered an unmistakable Confucian connotation since *jing* (經) was often used to refer to ancient Confucian teaching. As for the

⁴⁰⁵ Guo Peishi, "Houping Shi zheng lu," 16-17.

content, *The Book of Being Human* was a mixture of modern nation-state ideology, citizen knowledge, and Guo's own administrative instructions with their distinct tint of Confucian norms. From the wording and the absence of Western music scores, these songs were presumably sung in indigenous language and to melodies improvised by the local students. This is an extract from Guo Peishi's song on the Three-Barrel-in-One Doing Thing Theory (about this "theory," see Section Four in Chapter One):

No 16. Three-Barrel-in-One

Do not walk out, my brother! What can you do if you encounter a bandit with a gun? Suing only incurs more banditry and disasters. You can't live behind the closed door without getting along with people. Pick up the barrel of hoe, my brother! Teach me to dig out mountains and fill seas for easy walking. Pick up the barrel of a gun, my brother! Teach me to fight bandits and the Japanese. Pick up the barrel of a pen, my brother! You remind me: it's no use to blame others if I don't study. Pick up the three barrels, my brother! Otherwise, don't walk out... The society is formed by you, me, and him. Only a fool can neither give an order nor follow it... be successful or die. A human being can't be distracted.⁴⁰⁶

Just like in many other societies, "brother" can refer either to an older male or a lover, depending on who says it. Guo Peishi's lyrics were designed to be sung by both male and female Houping youngsters, who had a custom of wooing each other with love song exchanges. One can only imagine that how effectively the information of this song would be delivered when it was sung by maids. Even if the singers were male, the kind form of the song could still make it irresistible to the Houping people. In either scenario, the administrative orders and concepts of Guo Peishi found a way to stay in the minds of people. Relying on this unique channel of propaganda, Guo Peishi was even able to instill the political imagination of a common ancestor:

No. 11 Our Ancestors

⁴⁰⁶ GPA 8-5082-5-13 " Ge xian bao jia zhi yuan xun lian (Houping County) December 28th 1939" (Baojia Personnel Training in Counties (Houping County) December 28th 1939), 5.

The Yellow Emperor who defeated Chiyou was the ancestor of our nation. Confucius who studied and taught tirelessly was the ancestor of our people. General Yue Fei who served his county loyally until his death was the ancestor of our war against Japan and the reconstruction of the state. Sun Yat-san who established the Republic and its principles was the ancestor of the Republic of China. The only proper way to show our filial piety to our ancestors is to study, teach, fight the war against the enemy, and reconstruct the state.⁴⁰⁷

But for the presence of modern state ideology, one might believe Guo Peishi to be a Ming or Qing Confucian official serving in pre-modern Guizhou. Given the profound analysis that Guo had made for Houping's problems, this anachronism was unlikely to be the outcome of a Han Chinese official's wishful thinking. *The Book of Being Human* was written and designed by Guo Peishi as a textbook of primary education to install within his largely illiterate people the most basic knowledge necessary for his administration within forty-five days. By August 20th 1939, about nine months after he took the office, Guo Peishi had had in every bao within his jurisdiction a literate person who could read Guo Peishi's spoken language orders.⁴⁰⁸ As Guo Peishi claimed:

I believe my greatest contribution to the county administration was not fulfilling some achievements or establishing some institutions, but the wide oral recitals of *The Book of Being Human*, which was mentally accepted and bodily practiced, and has become a social custom and individual habit of living.⁴⁰⁹

For Guo Peishi, the ultimate goal of administration was to turn administrative orders into the customs of people. However, imposed orders can hardly become people's customs automatically. Through his years in Houping, Guo Peishi attained a profound understanding of how administrative orders could only work when they were connected with people's everyday lives. Guided by this understanding, all major administrative tasks in Houping were designed not only

⁴⁰⁷ GPA 8-5082-5-13 " Ge xian bao jia zhi yuan xun lian (Houping County) December 28th 1939" (Baojia Personnel Training in Counties (Houping County) December 28th 1939), 2.

⁴⁰⁸ Guo Peishi, "Houping Shi zheng lu," 32.

⁴⁰⁹ Guo Peishi, "Houping Shi zheng lu," 38.

to occupy the center of people's lives and customs, but also to "civilize people and fulfill customs (*hua min cheng su* 化民成俗)." ⁴¹⁰

To further expand the influence of his understaffed county government, Guo Peishi entirely abandoned the norm of only using qualified civil servants. In the beginning, he published advertisements on provincial newspapers to recruit official employees. However, the notoriety of Houping and its poor standards of living made it extremely difficult for him to recruit people. Even though some people were hired, the turnover rate was so high that within months more than thirty employees had come and gone. As a result, Guo Peishi decided to indigenize his county government and find capable cadres from within the society. Because Houping was a county that had no regular schools, the word "capable" had to be redefined. Guo Peishi recruited "experts," who had the sorts of talent that would be respected by ordinary people. Thus a wide variety of experts outside the traditional category of educated people, from the mason, the gun builder and the carpenter, to the silkworm raiser, the herbal quack, and the tiger fighter (*da hu shi* 打虎師 a hunter who was good at hunting tigers), were invited to serve in the county government. Even water masters (*shi shi* 水師), ethnic minority sorcerers who cured people with water, were "hired" and consulted by Guo Peishi, who had apparently overcome any ideological bias against this so-called superstition. ⁴¹¹ For a financially stretched county magistrate, the only way he could keep these experts was by giving them same housing, meals, and conditions of living that he had. As a result, within the county government, there was no hierarchy in terms of working treatment. Guo Peishi and his "fellows" worked together, studied together, ate together, and lived together. One should not underestimate this tactic of teaching in person (*shen jiao* 身教). It was the most

⁴¹⁰ Guo Peishi, "Houping Shi zheng lu," 40.

⁴¹¹ Guo Peishi thought the craft of water master was totally a superstition. Nevertheless, since there was no modern medicine in Houping, he still acknowledged the effect of water master in providing people some psychological support. Guo Peishi, "Houping Shi zheng lu," 18, 32.

important means Guo Peishi had to accumulate his military capital, which increased from one pistol to 1,200 guns by the May of 1940. At the start, Guo Peishi, just like other administrators, saw the establishment of a reliable force to be a technical issue, irrelevant to the personal moral quality of county magistrate. He planned to hire mercenaries from other counties to build a police force that had no local connection.

The extremely tough situation in Houping made such recruitment very slow. Those who were hired soon disappointed Guo Peishi, because they were not willing to follow his orders. As a result, Guo Peishi turned to the local people. To his surprise, those who came collectively to be soldiers of the county were skin family members who owed allegiance to a few bosses. It was required that people who came from the same “family” to be hired altogether. In other words, if Guo hired these volunteers, he would actually “outsource” the county’s military force. Guo Peishi anxiety was imaginable. If he could not find enough reliable soldiers, no other administrative works would be able to take place.

Again, it was the wisdom and imagination of Confucian statecraft that came to his rescue. Guo Peishi realized that the skin family members were all that he could get. Thus, he hired two groups of skin family members from two bosses, and formed two squads of the county police force. This tactic of check and balance was typical, and could easily be found throughout Chinese history.

Guo Peishi’s military fortifying did not stop here. He let all of the soldiers live with him under the same roof. These skin family members surprisingly came to find that the county magistrate was their new family member. Everyday, they saw the county magistrate working in front of them while they were training. From time to time they were accosted by Guo Peishi, who treated them like real family members. Guo let them talk about whatever they wanted, and

shared his ideas with them. He also treated soldiers who got sick. When going out on dangerous missions, these soldiers witnessed their county magistrate standing by their side without fear on his face. The message Guo wanted to deliver was clear: all soldiers could count on him, just like how he counted on them. They were equal members in the same team. As if to test whether all the people understood him, one day Guo Peishi intentionally broke his own rule by openly giving his meal one more dish of beans. He was satisfied when his soldiers pointed this out immediately, because he now knew that his subordinates were willing to tell him the truth.⁴¹² Through personal contact and charisma, rather than any institutional guarantee, Guo eventually won the hearts of these local soldiers. Unconsciously, they became the family members, and not the skin ones, of Guo Peishi. In this situation, the two bosses who had previously owned those soldiers had no choice but to let themselves be replaced by the county magistrate, who was now backed up by a group of disciplined and loyal soldiers. These soldiers became the best recruitment advertisement for other skin family members, and finally gave them strong motivation to escape from their serf status. Relying on this force, over the three years of his term, Guo was able to take down the disobedient strongmen one-by-one, at a cost of two hundred people who ended up dead or wounded.⁴¹³

Guo Peishi's Confucian approach to administration cannot be fully understood if we ignore his tactic of eliminating bandits. According to Guo's theory, those local bandits (*tu fei* 土匪) actually originated from the bandit in mind (*xin fei* 心匪), which means the mindset of thinking like a bandit. The so-called bandit in mind is not some abstruse aphorism, as an oriental wise man might speak of in Hollywood movies. Guo Peishi was in fact revealing how it was tempting

⁴¹² Gan Zaicheng, Xui Yongming, Chen Boquan, Jiao Changgeng, and Shen Juanhua, "Neng gan xian zhang-Guo Peishi" (The Competent County Magistrate-Guo Peishi), *Wuchuan wen shi zi liao xuan ji* 3 (1985), 163.

⁴¹³ Guo Peishi, "Houping Shi zheng lu," 20-21, 31.

for many officials to act according to, and in fact be limited by, the logic of bandits. In doing so, they forgot that it is the legitimacy of the state's official and its righteous measures, not better conspiracies and weapons, which define a county magistrate. This was especially true for Guo Peishi, whose real power never came from guns but from the belief of people. Eliminating the bandit-in-mind meant to clearly comprehend that the priority and goal for his administration was saving people, not killing bandits. Then, from high to low, Guo Peishi gave the "elimination" of official banditry (*guan fei* 官匪 corruption), military banditry (*bin fei* 兵匪 undisciplined governmental soldiers), bullying banditry (*hao fei* 豪匪 local strongmen) and finally real banditry respective priorities on his action list. In this analysis, every form of banditry was the cause of the one that immediately followed it. In other words, real bandits would no longer be a problem worthy of military force, once the other forms of banditry had been destroyed. One can also sense that the higher priority a form of banditry had on the list, the less necessary it was to use pure violence to solve it. In this way, Guo Peishi's ideology allowed him to make a helpful and just political differentiation that minimized the scale of a military campaign and thus the number of people who had to be risk their physical wellbeing.

In the process of concrete enforcement, the spirit of non-violent solutions was also valued. He targeted a few bosses, and asked them to hand over their guns first. For those who followed his order, he kept his promise of absolving their previous crimes. For those who could not reach an agreement with him, Guo Peishi would also let them leave, even though they would refuse to surrender once they were back on their own turfs. Certainly, there were times when force was inevitable. Guo Peishi let everyone knew that when he announced that he would deal with a strongman, he meant it, and would not attack any others without warning. He would, however, launch a thorough campaign against anyone who dared help his target. By using this divide-and-

conquer tactic, Guo Peishi effectively neutralized most of the bandits and had eventually pacified the majority of the county by May 1939.⁴¹⁴

What happened in Houping was by no means a fairy tale, in which real political and military maneuvers were not important. However, the realpolitik aspect cannot be fully explained or understood if we ignore the cultural framework that Guo Peishi relied on in his dealings with reality. Partly because of the pressures imposed by Guo Peishi, the rest of bandits in Houping resorted to receiving help from other bandits, who were also being pushed out by the regular army in adjacent Sichuan province towards the border of Houping. As a result, nearly 3000 armed bandits invaded Houping in late April 1939. At the time, Guo Peishi had only 200 soldiers, and half of them were still fighting with residual bandit forces. At this juncture, Guo Peishi overruled the advice of holding only the county seat to wait for reinforcements from the province. To the contrary, Guo Peishi ordered his troops to escape from their fights with the residual bandits, and to regroup immediately. He wanted to attack an enemy that had almost fifteen times his force. Many people were shocked by the irrationality of the county magistrate, but Guo Peishi was unmoved by the panic of his people. He divided his troops into small units, and sent them to attack and harass the bandits constantly. Few of his illiterate subordinates knew that Guo's methods were a time-honored strategy of how to crack down on a rebellious force. The bandit force might outnumber the official troops but they had no quality, intelligence, or, most importantly, a psychological advantage. A proactive attack could mislead suspicious bandits, who only cared about keeping their guns, and cause them overestimate Guo Peishi's power and dissuade them from further pushing forward. Guo Peishi had learnt from imperial statecraft the weakness and strengths of bandits. They tended to have no single commander who was able to concentrate their power during a battle. However, if they occupied the huge area outside of the

⁴¹⁴ Guo Peishi, "Houping Shi zheng lu," 22.

county seat, they could almost immediately bring Houping back to its previous status of anarchy, where most of Houping's residents were ready outlaws. In that scenario, all of Guo's previous effort to recover the social order would be in vein. For this reason, Guo Peishi decided to trust in his better trained and disciplined small army. The outcome proved the accuracy of Guo's strategy. Within ten days, the allied bandit force had been destroyed by Guo's troops. The ringleaders, including those who had killed the previous county magistrate, were arrested and beheaded.⁴¹⁵

This audacious action was based on a subtle comprehension of human nature, which was basically neglected in public administrative education but greatly emphasized in Chinese works of history and statecraft such as *Comprehensive Mirror in Aid of Governance*. One can say that it was this very traditional understanding of human beings that formed the major characteristic of Guo Peishi's style of administration. In a sense, it is this defining component that distinguishes Guo Peishi from the other public administrators. For example, a tactic he used time and again was to catch a criminal, only to let him propagandize the government's policy during the farmers' market and to name others who had committed similar crimes in exchange for his own pardon. Here, Guo Peishi demonstrated his legalist aspect: he did not hesitate to use the not-so bright side of human nature in order to achieve his civilizing mission.

⁴¹⁵ Guo Peishi, "Wu yue Houping zhi xian zheng," 21. According to other sources, the way Guo Peishi executed those bandits seemed very brutal. Guo Peishi did not shoot those ringleaders. Instead, he ordered to cut off their heads and dig out organs from dead bodies. A source even claimed that Guo Peishi ate criminals' organs with wine. While this cannibalism is probably exaggerated, one can sense that Guo Peishi's intention to show his ruthlessness at the juncture of emergency. Some people recalled that this calculated brutality did scare those local strongmen who eventually decided to remain obedient during the campaign. See Gan Zaicheng, Xui Yongming, Chen Boquan, Jiao Changgeng, and Shen Juanhua, "Neng gan xian zhang-Guo Peishi," 162. Cao Yuansong, "Jiu meng suo ji," 9. Tian Changan, "Houping zhi xian nian qi nian xian zhang bei sha you si ren (There Were Four County Magistrates Killed in the 27 year History of Houping as an Established County)," *Yanhe wen shi zi liao (Cultural and Historical Materials of Yanhe)* 8 (1999), 49.

However, it would be a mistake to think that only non-modern understandings of human nature were used as a technique in Guo Peishi's administration. By describing human nature in a classic way, Guo Peishi was able to demonstrate and uphold the legitimacy of his administration and other institutions that could hardly be recognized by scientifically minded modern intellectuals. Though he was never overtly a theorist, Guo Peishi, consciously or unconsciously, had been developing a new political science, or more precisely, a modern statecraft with its own assumption and basis of legitimacy. For instance, when explaining why his grass root administration was run by short-term trained primary school teachers, who also took on the job of village leaders and tax collectors, Guo Peishi was proposing a unique "mechanism" of human nature that had no basis in modern social science. He admitted that the identity of village leader or tax collector alone could not prevent grass root administrators from being corrupt. The identity of the rural teacher alone was also not a guarantee that the teacher would do their best to run their badly funded schools. However, the combination of village leader, tax collector, and schoolteacher encouraged the administrators to be clean and the teachers responsible. Guo Peishi argued that a village leader who was also a school teacher could not only do things more effectively by resorting to his identity as the peoples' teacher, but would also run his school painstakingly because his administrative authority would be lessened if people mocked him for his poor management of the school. Similarly, a teacher who simultaneously took administrative and tax collecting work would be unlikely to embezzle public funds, because the dignity of the teacher position would not allow him to commit the crime.

Undoubtedly, one can point to countless pieces of counterevidence that rebut Guo Peishi's rather stereotyped speculations into human reactions. Many of Guo's contemporaries actually criticized this three-in-one (*san wei yi ti* 三位一體) grass root administration, and promoted

more professionalized organizational principles. Faced with this rational challenge, Guo Peishi might have raised the question as to whether one could guarantee that there were no flaws in a professionalized grassroots administration. Could any one deny the possibility that many grassroots administrators could be motivated by social stresses and the sense of honor that accompanied his identity? Guo Peishi might argue: since we do not have the resources to establish an institution that is capable of withstanding scientific tests, why do we bother to waste our limited funds only to disprove ourselves? Why not build one that is indeed workable in local conditions? Perhaps for these reasons, Guo Peishi, a man who had tried to prove the absolute scientific nature of his profession so vehemently, unreservedly proposed many seemingly naïve suggestions to insiders who, in time, would come to understand him.

Having solved the banditry problem, the Houping county government also succeeded in basically rooting out opium growing in the county. Guo Peishi's slogan was "handing out guns for oxen; rooting out opium for crops."⁴¹⁶ To help Huoping people abandon their opium economy, the county government provided small loans for peasants to buy oxen, tools, and seeds. Guo noticed that in a province where cotton clothes were rare, Houping's indigenous weaving handicrafts had the potential to develop into a major income source. Therefore, he introduced cottonseeds from his friends working in Zhejiang University, which had been moved to Guizhou during the war, and promoted cotton cloth production. Soon, Houping's cloth became a reliable staple that had a huge market outside the county.⁴¹⁷ Meanwhile, Guo Peishi also used the income of selling confiscatory opium to the provincial government to enrich medical care in Houping.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁶ Guo Peishi, "Houping Shi zheng lu," 21.

⁴¹⁷ Yang Boju, Liu Dawei, "Wo men suo liao jie de Guo Peishi xian sheng" (The Mr. Guo Peishi We Knew), *Yancheng wen shi zi liao* (Cultural and Historical Materials of Yancheng) 9 (1990), 188.

⁴¹⁸ GPA 5656 "Houping xian qing chu li so huo tou yun yan tu" (The Request from Houping to Cope With the Confiscated Opium).

Gradually, by relying on a close connection with people, Guo's county government was able to collect land and household tax in this once lawless county. The county government launched a land report, which was faithfully enforced according to Guo Peishi's suggestion proposed in 1936 (see Section Four in Chapter One). The government only required people to fill out how much income they gained from their lands and trusted those numbers. Then, he asked people to pay tax in person, according to the dictates of their good conscience. In so doing, he claimed that the 800 yuan of official land tax quota was fully achieved, and that almost 90% of the 18,000 yuan of household tax quota was collected. In Guo Peishi's view, the honest spontaneity of the people was a just feedback for his honest administration. "The art of governance is nothing more than the combination of a honest mindset and appropriate methods (*zhi shu wu ta cun xin bu qi yu ban f tuo shan er yi* 治術無他, 存心不欺與辦法妥善而已)."⁴¹⁹

Such a story of human voluntarism as told by an official inevitably incurs numerous doubts from modern and social science minded people. How could it be possible for those impoverished people to pay their tax honestly without any cheating? Unfortunately for those who need objective evidence and reproducible experimental mechanisms to prove the authenticity of something, the available materials are definitely inadequate to support Guo Peishi's one-sided description. However, if we admit that the scientific method is only one of many useful (but flawed) ways to understand human reality, Guo Peishi's words, which were published in a journal designed to give future county magistrates some first hand experience, should not be simply dismissed as wishful nonsense or the self-congratulatory impulse of an incumbent official.⁴²⁰ In terms of establishing an explanatory framework where cause and effect have a

⁴¹⁹ Guo Peishi, "Houping Shi zheng lu," 20.

⁴²⁰ It is definitely true that Guo Peishi's words and most articles published on the *Service Monthly* can also not be read as manual instructions of administrative "machine." The content of this journal, instead, should be understood as a kind of political map which could not show readers what political/administrative reality looked

consistent and meaningful connection, the story represented by Guo Peishi is just as real as those depicted by social scientists with numerical data and “objective” ratiocination. According to the available archival sources, which were generated according to an administrative logic similar to the one adopted by social science, there is no indication that Houping under Guo Peishi’s command was in a state of disorder. On the contrary, the archival evidence tends to support Guo Peishi’s reality, where an administrator - or more properly, a Confucian official - literally held to the principles of the Great Learning (*da xue* 大學) and brought social order, justice and civilization back to Houping. The reality as perceived by Guo Peishi through lens of his Confucian assumptions was more authentic and responsive than the one that was constantly being analyzed by modern social scientists. Confucian teachings were by no means only abstract mottos, but the very base of Guo’s administrative reality.

As a matter of fact, Guo Peishi was fully aware of people’s tendency to avoid any administrative burden imposed on them. For example, he had mocked the idea of relying on baojia leaders to maintain real time household registration, an idea that had been invented by his classmate Xu Shipu. There were just too few motives for baojia leaders to take the time to walk to the county government to report the latest status of a household. Because he had no illusions about the people’s general initiatives, the household registration in his jurisdiction was bound up with the ration of salt. By providing cheap salt that could only be acquired when people came with their updated household data, Guo Peishi provided motivation for people to come and refresh their own and their neighbors’ household registration. In this isolated mountain county where salt was an expensive daily life necessity, people could get more salt if their households had new members move in, and would also receive more if they revealed that the other

like but only a rough idea of where and how to go.

households did not have as many members as they had registered, thus becoming entitled to their original quota. Guo's strong sense of reality also forced him to rethink the way of organizing baojia. Instead of using the conventional method that put nearby households together into an echelon of decimalization, baojia in Houping were formed according to the special geographic reality in Guizhou. Guo Peishi used the distance between the office and individual households to decide the range of baojia. All households distanced from a bao office within 6.5 km belonged to the unit. 6.5 km is, in theory, a distance that an adult can walk in 2 hours. This was definitely still a method that oversimplified the complicated terrain and transportation conditions, but Guo Peishi clearly knew that what mattered was not the number of units but the nature of human and geographic reality.⁴²¹

Guo Peishi's administration had classical Chinese assumptions about human nature assumption, and thus correcting social customs was an integral part of his administrative work, rather than some unnecessary ideological impetus that intruded on the private sphere, which public administration presumed to be basically irrelevant to the order of public life. Or, to put it differently, public administration actually has an obscure but undeniable ideological base upon which conflicting human needs should be regulated by some "ethically neutral," or "rational," institutional arrangement. However, it would have been unimaginable for Guo Peishi to give up his official interference in the private lives of those within his administration, which he saw as an ethical interaction between people that involved issues well beyond the realm of technical solutions. If emotional and moral ties did matter to the operations of administrative officials, like Guo Peishi, then there was no reason to imagine an inexistent distinction between custom (the social form of politics) and administration. During the same time that he combated the bandits in Houping, Guo Peishi had already begun to correct Houping's "evil customs." His first targets

⁴²¹ Guo Peishi, "Houping Shi zheng lu," 26.

were forced move-in marriages and skin family memberships, which were both mixtures of ethnic minority Miao customs and frontier practice. The skin family membership, as mentioned above, was a form of virtual lineage that acted as a survival strategy, where weak individuals worked for a boss in exchange of protection. The forced move-in marriage was just a deviation of Miao uxorial practices and skin family membership, and it allowed a powerful male to move in and claim a single or widow woman's body, family property, and children in return for providing them with security and supplies of living. Through these two social practices, bosses in Houping were able to possess a lot of male and female serfs in order to meet their economic and sexual needs. The forced move-in marriage was especially rampant in Houping, where ratio of men to women was 18:33. Guo Peishi believed that this abnormal gender ratio was caused by the continual armed conflicts among bosses that took numerous men's lives, and left many women who could not survive by themselves. These two social practices further fueled the bloody strives between the bosses. Guo Peishi, therefore, saw the elimination of these evil customs a necessary step toward the recovery of social order. Along with rooting out bosses' economic and military bases, the county magistrate intentionally denigrated skin family members as pig's family. His argument was rude but straightforward: bosses were just like pigs, for they did nothing but sleeping, roaring, and sabotaging things all the time. To be a skin family member, thus, was to be a pig in a pig's family. As for the forced move-in marriage, Guo Peishi resorted to his old method in Zhenjiang, and ordered that marriages would not be valid unless they were held on the prescribed days of farmers' market and presided by official appointed notaries.⁴²²

Guo Peishi was by no means a Confucian fundamentalist who would not tolerate any lifestyle that violated his values. His primary concern was whether or not a social practice helped people have a more productive life. For this reason, his staff and primary students were asked to

⁴²² Guo Peishi, "Houping Shi zheng lu," 22-23.

use joss paper as toilet paper, so as to make the superstition of burning “money” to ancestors and ghosts seem ridiculous. However, Guo Peishi continued to respect the water masters, even though he had no belief in this ethnic minority magic.⁴²³

With hindsight, we know that Guo Peishi successfully recovered the social order and government authority in Houping over the course of his three-year term. The achievements of Guo Peishi were so remarkable that he became one of the few Central Politics School magistrates who were summoned and praised by the top leader Chiang Kai-shek in person. Certainly, his achievements owed, in part, to the steady financial support of the provincial government. This few-thousand yuan investment, though not really huge during the war, did bring the province of Houping to a lasting state of peace in which no other extra cost was needed. Here, let’s imagine the following scenario. If Houping had been assigned to the high scientism of Guo Peishi, who had just “invented” a dozen public administration formulas (see Section Two in Chapter One), what would have happen? Thinking through this purely hypothetical question may help us further understand the differences between science-like public administration, and the type of statecraft Guo Peishi developed through his experiences and Confucian heritage.

To begin with, the public administrator Guo Peishi would treat Houping’s problems like technical issues that could be solved by scientific measures. The political judgments that the Confucian official Guo Peishi set as the base of all of his following analyses would be too unreliable and imprecise for the public administrator Guo, who would rather trust the power of math-like formulas than some “wishful” understanding of inherently good human nature. After gathering all objective social and economic data, mainly in forms of statistical numbers, public administrator Guo would begin to enact a full scale economic development and social reform program, so as to entirely eliminate the economic and social foundation of the bosses. The

⁴²³ Guo Peishi, “Houping Shi zheng lu,” 23.

emphasis would be put on introducing external capital to further develop the county's resources, and thus bring the society into the modern world. For this reason, the public administrator Guo would also need a well-financed police network, like the one established in Jiangning, to guarantee the security of economists and social engineers who entered Houping to guide the people through their social and economic life. Considering the county's turbulent status quo, it would be highly reasonable to assume that all residents were potential collaborators of the outlaws, rather than good people who could be won over by moral appeals. If possible, public administrator Guo would definitely call in reinforcements from the provincial regular army and send these forces out to fortified villages, and turn every virtual lineage based on irrational feudal customs into baojia directly controlled by the government. If the public administrator Guo did have had resources to fulfill all these goals, then he would establish a fully rationalized county government staffed with trained and paid civil servants, who dealt with things through standardized official documents and reports. Also, the regular elementary curriculum that was used nationwide would replace the Confucian official Guo's *The Book of Being Human*. All these differences between the public administrator and the real Confucian official Guo Peishi would have led to a very different administrative reality. In terms of feasibility and sustainability, the public administrative approach, which is supposed to be guarded by sound institutional reconstruction, does not seem to indicate any advantages over Guo Peishi's human rule. There was no guarantee that huge administrative and economic investment could turn Houping into a civilized society, if its numerous unfit elements were not eliminated.

One may still argue that Guo Peishi's approach was, after all, but a special byproduct in a single county with a small population and unique forms of backwardness. It cannot be used to

refute the efficacy of public administration in dealing with huge areas and populations. To answer this question, let us move to the next section, and resume Xu Shipu's story.

Section Three: The Retreat of Public Administration from East Guizhou

In 1940, Xu Shipu was called back by the Central Politics School to serve as a lecturer, to teach middle ranking civil servants who came to the school for a short-term re-education. Xu Shipu was then promoted to be the censor of the First Administrative and Inspectional Circuit in East Guizhou (*Qiandong* 黔東), on February 7th 1941.⁴²⁴ Accompanying this promotion was a huge responsibility, for it involved administering an area of about 30,000 km², with eighteen counties and an overwhelming ethnic minority population. East Guizhou had been a turbulent area ever since the Qing dynasty. Pressed by Han immigrants, who entered Guizhou for lands from the northeast, a significant part of the indigenous people had been forced to move into East Guizhou. The region would only become an integral part of China proper by the early 18th century, when the army led by Manchu governor Ertai turned these fiefdoms ruled by entitled hereditary tribal aristocrats into regular counties governed by appointed bureaucrats. However, the efforts to internalize this ethnic frontier had never been entirely successful. Although the Chinese state had managed to stabilize the region's social order with increasingly regular administrative interventions throughout the Qing era, large-scale riots broke out during the 1860s. It cost the empire the lives of one million people, and took twenty years for the rebellion to be finally cracked down. With the fall of the Qing, East Guizhou once again fell into a status of anarchy. During the early Republican period, the regional capital Zhenyuang (鎮遠) alone had

⁴²⁴ Liu Guoming ed. *Zhongguo Guomindang bai nian ren wu quan shu* (The Encyclopedia of the Celebrities in the 100 Year History of Chinese Nationalist Party) (Beijing: Consolidation Press, 2005), 1968.

been under occupation by several different bandit armies. By the 1940s, even though the Nationalist government had largely recovered political control and social order in the majority of Guizhou, the region remained dominated by local strongmen, who tended to be former indigenous tribal leaders. They often possessed opium plantations, private armies, and even their own independent governmental offices.⁴²⁵ If they were still considered entitled hereditary aristocrats and nominal imperial officials during the Qing dynasty, then their identity in the Republican era was far vaguer. Legally speaking, these local strongmen were mere ordinary citizens who had no official positions. However, in reality, they were real local power holders and had a higher degree of legitimacy than the formal officials appointed by the modern state. As a result, the fault between the discourse of the modern state and the ethnic frontier reality had increasingly widened.

If there had always been ethnic tension in East Guizhou, then it was worsened by the war and its economic monopoly over strategic materials. Among others, tong oil, which had long been a staple of the East Guizhou economy, could now only be sold to the state at very low official prices. As a result, the production of tong oil decreased significantly. This was a heavy blow to many local people's standard of living.⁴²⁶ However, the most explosive economic conflict arose from the Nationalist government's policy of rooting out opium. Opium had been the symbol of national humiliation ever since the Opium War in 1840. In all revolutionary discourses, opium was seen as a source of evil, and part of the imperialist plot to weaken the Chinese people. Therefore, the Nationalist government had to take an uncompromising position against opium growing, which had been the most important economic plant in the entire of

⁴²⁵ GPA 8-2-560 "Ge du cha yuan cheng bao dao da ri qi ji gong zuo ri ji" (Reports from Inspectors about Arriving Dates and Working Logs), 1.

⁴²⁶ GPA 8-2-566-0008 "Guizhou min zheng ting yi qu du cha zhuan yuan shi cha bao gao February 1938" (The Inspection Report of Censor of Guizhou First Administrative and Inspectional Circuit).

Southwest China. Especially for people in Guizhou, opium growing had provided the major, if not the only, lucrative activity in this mountainous and backward province. In other words, on national level, there was a conflict between modern state ideology and local economic reality. But, for the local ethnic minorities whose everyday customs involved growing and smoking opium, rooting out opium simply meant a ruthless assault upon their economy and their culture.

From Xu Shipu's memoirs, one can sense that Xu Shipu saw the crux of problem in his jurisdiction as an administrative issue, which by nature was not very different from what he encountered in Guiding. While being fully aware of the power of local strongmen, he made up his mind to take a hardline approach to the problem from the very beginning. He disagreed with the compromising, but time-honored practice of giving some local strongmen official titles. Instead, what Xu Shipu desired was a fundamental solution to the social disorder whereby more regular police forces would be deployed in every corner of his eighteen counties.

Before Xu became the censor, there had already been signs of crisis. As early as the spring of 1939, the Central Politics School inspector Zhao Lianfu (趙連福) observed the potential risk in East Guizhou. When he inspected Dejiang county (德江縣), Zhao found that local strongmen, who had closer connections to secret societies than the government, rarely followed the orders of state. Meanwhile, newly appointed young officials in the county tended to be too eager to complete administrative tasks in a short space of time. As a result, grass root ethnic minority people had developed a deep dissatisfaction with the government. Although he had advised that the authorities should take any measures necessary to defuse the social tension, Zhao did not know that his opinion would soon become a fatal prophecy for one of his classmates in that same region.⁴²⁷

⁴²⁷ Shang Chuandao, "Dui Wu Dingchang zhu Qian qi nian de hui yi," 56-57.

The first Central Politics School magistrate killed in the region was Gao Huansheng (高煥陞). Gao became the magistrate of Jianhe county (劍河縣) in May 1938.⁴²⁸ More than 70% of the county's population was Miao, and could only speak in this language.⁴²⁹ He, along with other nearby censors and magistrates dedicated themselves to a dangerous anti-bandit campaign from almost the moment he arrived. The following words come from the inscription on a stele that was erected by Gao and the other officials after the campaign, and can help us understand the ethnic social tensions - in Jianhe in particular, but also the entire East Guizhou in general:

... Though the bloodline was divided into Miao and Han, we are all heirs of the Yellow and Fire Emperors. Moving to remote places, our customs turned rude. Disparate practices led to the loss of great harmony. Assembling a brutal and heinous crowd, members in the same family wielded weapons against each other... Eventually we returned to consciousness in surprise, and promised each other to renew ourselves. Drink the wine and show our sincerity. We are determined to recover our past brotherhood....

December 1938.⁴³⁰

From the message on this stele, one can sense there a chronic violent conflict between Han and Miao. In fact, as Gao Huansheng pointed out in an article, large scale fights were even quite frequent between Miao people and bandits.⁴³¹ Gao also found that most armed groups in this region were not generated by economic or social factors. In other words, they were not social bandits. Most of them ran private armies as a family business, as they had done for generations.

⁴²⁸ Chen Yuanzhuo, "Min guo shi qi Jianhe xian li ren xian zhang jian jie" (The Short Profile of Jianhe County Magistrates during Republican Era) and "Nanming di qu Tong zu ren min kang bao dou zheng" (The Anti-tyranny Struggle of Tong People in Nanming Area), *Jianhe wen shi zi liao* (Cultural and Historical Materials of Jianhe) 1 (1985), 54. 64-65, 142-148. Later, Pan Zhixiang was trapped and killed by another Nationalist general. Pan's younger brother Pan Zhihe became an important insurgent leader in East Guizhou Incident. See He Changfeng, "Qiangong shi bian shu lun" (On East Guizhou Incident), *Guizhou min zu yan jiu* (Guizhou Ethnographic Studies) 4 (1986), 122.

⁴²⁹ GPA 8-2-526 "Yi qu zhuan yuan shi cha bao gao 1938" (The Inspection Report of the Censor of the First Circuit).

⁴³⁰ Lin Menshang, "Chu Zuoxuan shi lue" (The Concise Biography of Chu Zuoxuan), *Qianshang wen shi zi liao* (Cultural and Historical Materials of Qianshang) 2 (1991), 177-178.

⁴³¹ Gao Huansheng, "Dui yu su qing fei huan de jing yan" (The Experience of Eliminating Bandit), *Fuwu* 4 (1939), 20.

Upon reaching this conclusion, Gao Huansheng saw it unnecessary to negotiate with the local strongmen and bandits. He believed that an uncompromising military suppression and a thorough grass-root administrative reorganization was the only effective way to establish order in the county.⁴³² No one could have expected that only a few months after the victory of his anti-bandit campaign, Gao Huansheng would be murdered.

In most memoirs generated in People's Republic of China, Gao and his successor Bu Qingfang (卜青芳), another Central Politics School graduate, were described as typical local tyrants who tortured the *Tong* people simply for the purposes of tax extraction. According to the *Tong* witnesses who participated in the killing of the magistrate, Gao Huansheng was attacked by residents of the entire *zai* (寨 a village of ethnic minority). The testimony of those participants can only be seen as a supplementary source, because of its strong political tone and exaggerated details. For example, many witnesses claimed that Gao Huansheng burnt chilli peppers, stimulating a smoke that tortured some of his victims to death. If Gao's goal was to collect tax, as those witnesses claimed, whether he needed to resort to such brutal and inefficient methods is an interesting question. In addition, the testimony also indicates that what Gao wanted those "victims" to give over was opium. This seems to be the real reason that inspired the collective indignation of the *Tong* villagers. No matter how "cruel" Gao Huansheng might have been, it is clear that his death had a lot to do with the elimination of opium growing in his jurisdiction. Additionally, the place Gao was killed was 65 km from the county seat. The conscription quota the area owed was 75 people. Gao Huansheng had inspected the area several times. Furthermore, the man who led the riot was a retired *Tong* low-ranking army officer, and the chief of joint-bao

⁴³² Gao Huansheng, "Dui yu su qing fei huan de jing yan," 20-23.

office. Last but not least, there had already been a magistrate killed in Jianhe in 1935.⁴³³ All things considered, the death of Gao seems to be the outcome of an over-hasty administrative penetration into a place where people had mastered “the art of not being governed.”⁴³⁴

On May 25th 1940, another Central Politics School magistrate of Taigiang county (台江縣), Zuo Qiwen, was shot and killed in the process of arresting prisoners who were escaping from the jail. The thug who committed the crime was the Miao local strongman Pan Zhixiang (潘致祥), who had led several fully armed outlaws to rescue his relatives by force.⁴³⁵ Zuo was a hometown fellow of Guo Peishi, and a classmate of Xu Shipu. He had worked in Taijiang for a year, and developed a good relationship with the local Miao population. He participated in their festivals, and showed great respect to Miao customs. All these measures had won him a good reputation among the Miao people in the county. No one expected that this capable county magistrate would be killed by other Miao outlaws, who came in from a nearby county.⁴³⁶

Despite these omens, Xu Shipu seemed to underestimate the power of ethnic tension in his jurisdiction. The magistrate of Huangping county (黃平縣), Zhou Jibin (周繼斌), described an assimilation policy he had enforced in the county in September 1941, about seven months after Xu took the office. He believed that to ultimately solve the discrimination against the Miao, the assimilation process should be started with Miao women, who would be banned from wearing their ethnic costumes in the county. Zhou even authorized Han women to correct those disobedient Miao women. In addition, all Miao women with their ethnic clothes would be

⁴³³ GPA 8-2-30 “Liping Dong zhuan yuan dian bao Jianhe Wang xian zhang bei qiang qing xing” (The Telegraph of Liping Censor Dong regarding the Murder of Jianhe County Magistrate Wang).

⁴³⁴ GPA 8-3761-3-4 “Xian zhang Gao Huansheng deng fu xu de xun lin” (The Instruction of Paying Consolation Money for Gao Huansheng and Others), 1-4.

⁴³⁵ Li Maolin, “Pan Zhixiang er san shi” (Some Stories of Pan Zhixiang), *Zhenyuan wen shi zi liao* (Cultural and Historical Materials of Zhenyuan) 3 (1989), 135-140.

⁴³⁶ Yang Boju, “Kang zhan qi jian zai Guizhou ren zhi de Zuo Qiwen xian zhang” (The County Magistrate Zuo Qiwen serving in Guizhou during the War of Resistance), *Binhai wen shi zi liao* (Cultural and Historical Materials of Binhai) 3 (1993), 65-68.

prohibited from entering into farmers' markets.⁴³⁷ One can imagine the terrible side effects that followed this unscrupulous policy. Ethnic tensions would only intensify with every improper intervention. There was no sign that Xu had any problems with the awkward policy of his subordinate.

From the inspection report he sent to the provincial government shortly after his taking office, Xu Shipu seemed satisfied with the administrative work in East Guizhou. For example, he praised the achievement of baojia organization in Songtao county (松桃縣):

Now baojia in the county have followed the principle of decimalization, none of them [bao or jia] have less than six or more than fifteen units.

He apparently thought it necessary to absolutely follow the regulations regarding baojia organization. Meanwhile, Xu also promoted his household registration board system in the county, although he admitted that baojia leaders did not use it. Besides this, he had no complaints about the county.⁴³⁸

Xu Shipu put his emphasis on the full development of local infrastructure and economy, without paying enough attention to financial situation of the impoverished ethnic minorities. To begin with, he let his counties to build public property for townships and villages through the regular approach. Building public property for villages and townships (*xiang zhen zao chan* 鄉鎮造產) was another problematic design of the new county framework. In theory, townships and villages could raise themselves by owning and running some public property, which in most counties meant public farms plowed by compulsory labor. The design was especially desirable in Guizhou, where uncultivated public lands seemed to be abundant. If all sub-county governmental

⁴³⁷ GPA 8-118-30 “Ben xian nei you xiao gong zuo zhi chen shu, Huangping xian zhang Zhou Jibin” (The Description of Effective Works in the Jurisdiction, Huangping County Magistrate Zhou Jinbin September 10th 1941), 1.

⁴³⁸ GPA 8-2-581 “Zhuan yuan dai biao xun shi bao gao 1942.”

units had their own public farms where high value economic plants were grown, it seemed entirely possible for these units to be self sufficient. However, the designer of the institution ignored an important fact: Guizho might have a lot of land, but an insufficient labor force. There were fewer than 60 people per km².⁴³⁹ The province had so many wastelands because it had no people to cultivate them. In this situation, using compulsory labor to cultivate public lands was just another form of corvee tax imposed on people.⁴⁴⁰ To make it worse, there was no high-value plant that was actually profitable enough to raise funds for county governments. Barren wastelands and labor shortages meant growing ordinary food crops, which required high levels of both manpower and manure, would be unlikely. As a result, most counties turned to tong or the castor oil plant. Both of them could be grown with little labor input, and generate oil that was useful and profitable to the war. Even so, the chances of making money remained small. Tong trees would be useless until they grew up, which took at least a decade. Wild castor oil plant grew quickly and everywhere, and one needed to gather a number of seeds to squeeze enough oil from it, which meant labor input.⁴⁴¹ Moreover, while the local government did have ways of organizing compulsory oil production, how to deliver the oil from the mountainous wild to the market, and how to deal with the competition among counties and other private sources, were thorny problems. In this situation, building public property for village and township became another excuse to tax. The enforcement of building public property in Xu Shipu's jurisdiction represented the worst-case scenario of the policy. An inspector reported to Xu Shipu in 1941 that

⁴³⁹ Shang Chuandao, "Dui Wu Dingchang zhu Qian qi nian de hui yi," 38.

⁴⁴⁰ GPA 1-7455 "Tongren Anshun Puan Anlong Duyun Zhenyuan Qiongjiang deng xian shi cha du dao bao gao" (The Inspection Report of Tongren, Anshun, Puan, Anlong, Duyun, Zhenyuan, and Qianjiang Counties 1941-1942), 44.

⁴⁴¹ As the Central Politics School magistrate Bu Qingfang reported, wild castor oil plants were everywhere in Jianhe. He claimed it a potential financial source. What he did not say is why no one turned these "lucrative" plants into oil. See GPA 8-5398 "Ge xian xiang zheng zao chan (Jianhe)" (Building Village/Township Property in Counties (Jianhe) 1940-1947), 23.

building public property in Songtao was promoted by levying private arable farms. In other words, the sub-county governmental units directly extracted “public” funds from private properties. However, the inspector only told Xu that this expediency was liable to cause illegal methods of fund raising. The vague attitude of the inspector might have reflected the real policy of the fiscal hungry Xu. Since he had invented a new tax in Guiding, why not in Songtao? Xu Shipu seemed to overestimate the taxable potential of his ethnic minority people.

Xu’s ambitious administration went beyond imposing a new tax on the people. For instance, in his descriptions about building a huge military airport for US and Chinese air forces, Xu did not have a word to say about the hardship of the people. In his words, the focus of the story was the demonstration of “the importance of management” in the context of “working competition.” He gives a vivid picture of how county magistrates in his jurisdiction competed with each other to have their corvees assigned ahead of the schedule. Although a system to improve the compulsory workers’ meals and their living conditions was proposed, this was perceived as a matter of efficiency. Considering that workers were distributed and levied through 18 counties according to the population proportion of each county, one can image that many workers who lived in counties far away from the working site were unable to go home for weeks, or even months.⁴⁴² The sacrifices and pains people had to endure were such that the problems generated by this construction could hardly have been limited to those regarding management and efficiency. The workers’ competition, which was seen by Xu Shipu as a mechanism of “proper encouragement (*gu li you fang* 鼓勵有方),” probably increased the intensity of labor to an unbearable extent. However, Xu Shipu just focused on the issues of efficiency. By the same token, he hymned about the rapid increase in motorway building in an poetic phrase, “new lines

⁴⁴² The Provincial Office of Culture and History, “Huangping Jiuzhou ji chang xiu jian ji” (The Construction of Huangping Jiuzhou Airport), *Guizhou wen shi zi liao xuan ji* (*The Selective Collection of Cultural and Historical Materials of Guizhou*) 28 (1988), 182-185.

are added on the map (*yu di xin tian xian ji tiao* 輿地新添線幾條).” The ambitious censor felt there was nothing wrong with imitating ancient forms of elegant expression to describe the backbreaking work of the people.⁴⁴³ If the construction of military transportation was more or less inevitable, then it is unlikely that Xu Shipu’s policy of establishing high schools in every county was an unavoidable choice. Before Xu arrived, there were at least eight educational institutes that were able to absorb elementary school graduates. Within a year of his term, Xu claimed that all counties in his circuit had established their own high schools. Again, he mentioned the effect of working competition in promoting the policy.⁴⁴⁴ As to whether the ethnic minorities, who rarely received a primary education in this region, needed so many high schools, is a question that never came to Xu Shipu’s mind.

The crisis might never have broken had there had been no organizational resources available in East Guizhou. Unfortunately to Xu Shipu, there were. The Collective Good Society (同善社), just like its predecessors within the millenarian cult in Chinese history, was an indigenous religious organization that combined all kind of traditional resources, from Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, to “local superstitions, and *qikong* (氣功 a cure practice of circulating invisible energy through one’s body by breathing and perceiving.) The Collective Good Society, which originated in Sichuan at the end of Qing Empire, had acquired a certain popularity among some of the social groups towards the bottom rungs of society in Sichuan, Hunan, and Guizhou by the 1940s. Like other millenarian cults, its grass root disciples tended to be the poorest and most marginalized people, including bandits and ethnic minorities, while the cadres were those who could comprehend certain levels of cultural capital, such as private tutelage teachers, quacks, and low ranking army officers. On the one hand, the Collective Good Society was only a loosely

⁴⁴³ Xu Shipu, *Cong zheng Liu ji* 60-62.

⁴⁴⁴ Xu Shipu, *Cong zheng Liu ji*, 58.

connected alliance formed between individual local believer groups, and these had poor horizontal connections with each other. On the other, it was still able to develop a prototype bureaucracy whereby leaders of different rankings took charge of some organization's "administrative works." This rudimentary bureaucracy provided some basic, though generally ineffective, coordination between disciples who were spread across a huge area. Seen from this perspective, although official documents accuse the Collective Good Society of being a collaborative group ultimately supported by the Japanese, it seems fair to say that grassroots peoples, especially those ethnic minorities, utilized the intellectual and organizational resources of the society to pursue their collective interests. In the context of the 1940 East Guizhou, this meant resisting the mobilizing and modernizing measures being imposed on them by the increasingly demanding Nationalist government and its local agencies.

Eventually, the East Guizhou Incident (黔東事變) broke out on August 23rd 1942. About four thousand people participated in a riot in Songtao county, led by a Miao Collective Good Society master. Considering all of the unscrupulous administrative measures that had been enforced in Songtao under Xu Shipu's command, it was no accident that the county was the crater of the people's anger. Although Xu Shipu had known about the conspiratorial activities of Collective Good Society in his jurisdiction, he basically saw it a collaborative organization directed by Wang Jingwei's regime. Probably because he underestimated the riot's indigenous momentum, it took him more than a month to eventually have the Songtao riot suppressed.

A few sentences on the denunciation proclamation made by insurgents expose Xu's blind spots in regards to the ethnic minority disaffection:

... Tax and Grain levy increased in pair annually, regardless of the anger people bore. Motorways are built every year, and those northerners enjoy the fruition. They give no pay to people for the construction but still blame them. Seeing people as slaves; putting them in jail for a slight default of tax.

Establishing institutes everywhere unscrupulously but allowing no complaint... Don't be oxen and horses of the others. knock down all corrupt officials. Establish a new government! Fulfill local autonomy!⁴⁴⁵

The insurgents had another justification for their actions. As a millenarian cult, the Collective Good Society had been spreading the rumor that the Mandate of Heaven (*tian ming* 天命) was about to be endowed to a rising new emperor. They utilized the political strife between Chiang Kai-shek and Wang Jingwei, announcing their loyalty to Wang's collaborate regime.⁴⁴⁶ However, from the above sentences, it seems that their behavior had some legitimacy.

At any rate, on October 28th 1942, the insurgency "suddenly" spread to Zhenyuan county, where Xu Shipu's headquarters was located. On that day, a village fell into the hands of the insurgents. The insurgents openly revealed their three proposals: "No Conscription. No Grain Levy. Open opium growing." Then, they opened the granary and distributed black flags to the crowd, which were symbols of participation, and amulets that allegedly had the magic power to shield the owner from bullets.⁴⁴⁷ Soon, two thousand people had joined the insurgents, who led them to attack the Zhenyuan county seat. A small police squad, probably sent in by Xu Shipu or the county magistrate Zhao Jinshan (趙金山 also a Central Politics School graduate), from the Zhenyuang county seat was annihilated in no time. As a result, Zhenyuang was encircled, and there were only 200 solders in the county seat. Some insurgents did break through into the walled county seat. But for the composure of a capable regular army commander Shi Zhongcheng (施中誠), Xu Shipu and Zhao Jinshan would have both been captured and killed.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁵ He Changfeng, "Qiandong shi bian shu lun," 120-121.

⁴⁴⁶ Liu Shifan, *Qiandong shi bian ji yao* (*The Summary Report of East Guizhou Incident*) (Manuscript, 1943), 42.

⁴⁴⁷ Liu Shifan, *Qiandong shi bian ji yao*, 26.

⁴⁴⁸ Liu Shifan, *Qiandong shi bian ji yao*, 26. General Shi Zhongcheng had served in and would become the commander of the 74th army which was probably the most fightable unit in the entire Chinese army.

Though insurgents in Zhenyuan failed to capture the county seat, they soon marched to other counties, where they had much more success. Soon, the county seats of Jianhe and Taijiang were occupied and plundered by insurgents.⁴⁴⁹ On December 14th 1942, a group of 1000 insurgents invaded Shiqian county. The Central Politics School magistrate Wang Mingyi sent two police force squads to fight the rebels out in the field, but the enemy soon outnumbered them. The insurgent army thus marched to the county seat, where Wang Mingyi led his small residual force to hold the county wall. He was able to recover from the previous frustrations on the battlefield, and eventually protected the county seat from falling into hands of insurgents.⁴⁵⁰ Nevertheless, Wang Mingyi could do nothing but witness his jurisdiction through the following days become a brutal battlefield upon which the insurgent and governmental armies fought.

The whole riot culminated on December 29th 1942, when more than 10,000 insurgents led by Miao chief Tai Shengjiang (邵勝江) attacked the military arsenal in Shidong (施洞), a strategic point that connected the northern and southern parts of East Guizhou.⁴⁵¹ Because most troops had been sent out to chase rebels on the northern bank of Qingshui River (清水江), only two newly recruited police squads (slightly more than 200 men) were stationed there. The commander Liu Heming (劉鶴鳴) found that insurgents from four directions were covering the field. Before the battle, women, children, and elders who had no weapons (or only knives and sticks) yelled on mountains to encourage their young men with the rifles and to scare the small defensive force. The mountains around Shidong seemed to be shocked by the huge sounds of

⁴⁴⁹ Jianghe's high school established in autumn 1943 was burnt out, which was a sign of people's anger with Xu Shipu's educational administration. GPA 1-7033 "Jianhe xian xing zheng ji hua 1943" (The Administrative Plan of Jianhe County), 17.

⁴⁵⁰ Liu Shifan, *Qiandong shi bian ji yao*, 36.

⁴⁵¹ Xu Zeping, "Qiandong ge zu ren min fan kang Guomindang zheng fu dou zheng ji shi" (The Veritable Record of East Guizhou Peoples' Resistance Struggle against the Nationalist Government), *Guiyang wen shi zi liao xuan ji* (*The Selective Collection of Cultural and Historical Materials of Guiyang*) 15 (1984), 113.

collective indignation. Although Liu Heming frustrated the attack with machine guns, mortars, and grenades stored in the arsenal, the entire situation in East Guizhou had already spiraled out of control. There was no indication that the riot would be put down in a short time.⁴⁵² Realizing this, Wu Dingchang ordered for the censor of the Third Administrative and Inspectional Circuit, Liu Shifan (劉時範) in West Guizhou, to exchange positions with Xu Shipu and take on the full responsibility of East Guizhou. The mission of recovering social order in this ethnic minority frontier had to be left to the shrewd official Liu, who possessed skills and knowledge that the public administrator Xu could not comprehend.

Ironically, the complexity of administering an ethnic frontier was most sufficiently described in 1956, by the middle aged Xu Shipu, who wanted to defend himself for failing to prevent that riot from breaking out. He quoted words from an article of the Song official Su Xun (蘇洵 1009-1066) on ruling Yizhou (益州 present day Sichuan), another ethnic frontier in Southwest China:

The turmoil yet to happen [*wei luan* 未亂] is easy to handle. The turmoil accompli [*ji luan* 既亂] is easy to handle. Having the sprout but no shape of a turmoil can be called the turmoil incoming [*jiang luan* 將亂]. The turmoil incoming is difficult to handle. It cannot be dealt with an approach as intense as that for the turmoil accompli. It can also not be dealt in a way as gradual as the case of turmoil yet to happen.⁴⁵³

Fifteen years later, Xu Shipu had more or less realized what he encountered in the fall of 1942 was an ambiguous state where the conceptual framework of public administration had been useless, if not outright harmful. The incoming turmoil in East Guizhou required a series of subtle measures if the ethnic minorities were to be dissuaded from taking further rebellious actions, and the explosive social tensions defused under the demanding circumstances of the war. In this

⁴⁵² Cheng Kuilang, “Qiangdong shi bian jing guo” (The Process of Qiangdong Incident),” *Wen shi zi liao cun gao xuan ji* (*The Selective Collection of Reserved Cultural and Historical Materials*) 1 (2006), 240.

⁴⁵³ Xu Shipu, *Cong zheng Liu ji*, 46-47.

uncertain state of emergency, the imprudent and impatient search for objective facts and immediate rational solutions according to logical reasoning only sparked in the already combustible social air, which pervaded among the anxious people. Unfortunately for the young (and even the middle-aged) Xu Shipu, his public administrative mind kept him from knowing what other resources he could resort apart from concrete executive power as backed up by scientific techniques.⁴⁵⁴ In his 1956 memoir, Xu Shipu still insisted on the accuracy of his “original” administrative tactic: deploying a large police force, developing the local economy, and establishing schools. While all these measures might be necessary for the long-term stability of the region, Xu Shipu could not consider the factor of timing within his agenda, due to the atemporal nature of scientific principles. Xu Shipu did not have the ability to imagine how in political reality a “universally true principle” could have one consequence in the morning, but another in the evening. This lack of what Pierre Bourdieu calls “practical reason” made it impossible for Xu Shipu, a once capable administrator in developing local economies, to fix the problem in East Guizhou.

⁴⁵⁴ Xu Shipu must have been fully aware of the dishonor the East Guizhou Incident brought to him. As a result, sometimes it is hard for readers to figure out from Xu’s vague description what he said were facts or simply things he hoped. For our purpose, what Xu actually did in East Guizhou is not so indispensable. Xu’s description is a univocal defense of what he thought necessary to tackle down the riot. As I have explained above, his understanding remains limited in technical issues. Moreover, from Xu’s likening the turmoil incoming as a tumor which should be treated by a resection operation, one can even sense Xu’s contempt of sophisticated manipulation of and balance among local strongmen. He thought this approach a meaningless compromise leading to no fundamental solution. Apparently, Xu did not really understand the status of turmoil incoming which in essence defies a once for all solution with standardized procedures. See Xu Shipu, *Cong zheng Liu ji*, 47-50. As a matter of fact, even in the end of his term as the censor in East Guizhou, he did not change his basic understanding of administration. In an article published in 1943, Xu Shipu still emphasized the importance of institutionalization in local administration, even though he admitted that for hinterland provinces, it was not easy to find so many qualified officials to staff the institutionalized new county framework. See Xu Shipu, “Xian zhi gai jin zhong zi zhi guan kui” (Some Tentative Observation of County Administrative Improvement), *Min quan zheng zhi ji kan* (*The Journal of Civil Right Politics*) 1 (1943), 96-100. Xu’s opinion in this article is very important for us to make an educated guess of how Xu understood the origin of the East Guizhou Incident and his own failure. Simply put, it seems proper to say that through Xu’s life he really believed that the problem was not caused by his public administration approach which highlighted the expansion of rationalized bureaucracy as the ultimate solution.

The best way to understand the reasons for Wu Dingchang appointing Liu Shifan (1900-1951) to handle the East Guizhou Incident is to see what Liu had done previously. Liu Shifan had not received a regular undergraduate education. He graduated from a professional school of agronomy, but spent most of his career as a local administrator.⁴⁵⁵ He became the censor of the Third Administrative and Inspectional Circuit, which contained 14 counties and 1.77 million people in West Guizhou in 1938. Just like other places in Guizhou, the majority of people living on the 32,000 km² area were rough and tough (*kuang han* 獷悍) ethnic minorities who owned guns and grew opium. While most officials tended to take a passive administrative style and try to maintain status quo so as not to make trouble, Liu Shifan was determined to bring law and order back to his jurisdiction. From the very beginning, Liu Shifan had not relied exclusively on the regular bureaucracy to collect information and enforce orders. He trusted in his eyes and personal contacts more than institutes. Thus, he rarely sat in the office, but spent most of time on tour, inspecting his jurisdiction. Thanks to a detailed inspection report he left, we can see how he promoted a better administration. In 1939, Liu Shifan rushed to the two most turbulent counties, Ceheng (册亨) and Zhenfeng (贞丰), in his jurisdiction. The joint border area of these two counties was Xiajiang (下江), which had been a desert of law and government ever since the early 1930s. Under these circumstances, Liu became the first governmental official who had stepped into Xiajiang in many years. At the time, Xiajiang was loosely controlled by a strongman Wang Haiping (王海平), who had taken the opportunities afforded by the chaotic war among warlords to become the self appointed local commander, and he owned two thousand rifles and a few machine guns. There were several smaller bandits or strongmen under his command, Among them, Cen Jiangkun (岑建坤), was the most notorious and active in the area.

⁴⁵⁵ GPA 1-1-2347 “Wei Zhongyang Zhengzhi xue xiao xue yuan shi xi ji Guizhou Wei zheng fu ming ce” (The Internship of Central Politics School Students and the Name-list of Guizhou Government 1940-1942).

The Ceheng magistrate was forced to compromise with Cen, and appointed him as his ally to the chief of a sub-county district. Consequently, Cen became a de facto agent of the government and profited from tax farming in the district. His avaricious tax farming made people in the district very angry. They eventually took action to protect themselves, killing the chief and a few of Cen's men. These outraged residents were actually manipulated by a local Chinese priest, Yuan Yage (袁雅各), who was dissatisfied with Cen for extracting too much from his parish. He set up the riot and told the crowd "by roast or by boil, eat him as you wish" when his "sheeps" had caught the victims and asked their father what to do next. This incident provided the direct reason for Liu Shifan to visit Xiajiang. Upon arriving, he received Father Yuan, who had bought and distributed twenty rifles to local residents in case Cen and Liu Shifan planned to prosecute the murderers. Liu Shifan had clearly made his mind up to deal with this religious strongman. However, on the surface, he simply asked Father Yuan Yage to promise not to let any similar crime happen again, and hand back the rifles they had taken from the victims. Yuan Yage agreed. Although Liu paid great attention to the arbitrary power of Yuan Yage in local reality and had observed all major disciples of Father Yuan, he decided not to deal with Yuan because he had the bigger picture in mind. Liu Shifan then went to visit Wang Haiping. Wang Haiping had been called "the devil of Xiajiang (*Xiajiang mo wang* 下江魔王)," and to show off his power, Wang had his subordinates carry guns and stand by his side when Liu Shifan talked with him. Liu Shifan showed no fear. He talked with the devil like an old friend, who really cared about the future of Wang and his subordinates. The event in fact was like a sermon, spoken by Liu Shifan regarding a greater world and life. He told the outlaws: the government was going to condone them because it was not entirely their fault that they had become bandits in the previously chaotic years. However, they needed to show their sincerity, too. In the holy war against Japan,

Liu believed, all these “heroes” could find a life much more meaningful than killing and robbery. According to Liu’s observation, most of those present were moved when they understood that the government was not abandoning them. Wang Haiping seemed especially inspired. He confessed with Liu that he had always pursued that which was good for the people. He was happy that he finally had the opportunity to cooperate with the government. Synthesizing Wang’s words and expressions with the scene of clean streets and villages in Xiajiang, Liu Shifan judged that Wang did want to obey the authority of the government, and have a good reputation for the rest of his life. Liu Shifan asked Wang Haiping to hand over Cen Jiankun, so as to test Wang’s sincerity. Wang did hand him over. At the end of report, Liu informed Wu Dingchang that he planned to neither release Cen Jiankun, nor to punish this bandit leader. Cen Jiankun would be held and treated nicely in the county government, since he could be used to pacify other bandits in Xiajiang. The two counties should take this chance to send capable officials to establish effective administration over the areas. Meanwhile, he emphasized that the ethnic minorities, rough and tough as they might be, were in fact very submissive to the governmental authority. The crux was whether or not the government dared to take on this authority and responsibility.⁴⁵⁶

This inspection report indicates the administrative approach and panoramic view of Liu Shifan. The report contains so many interesting details that it reads like an ethnographic work. Based on these vivid but seemingly unsystematic smaller images, Liu Shifan got the big picture of Xiajinag. Definitely, one can argue that all of Liu’s narratives are just one-sided observations, no objective evidence to support it. Nor was it undergirded by any institutional arrangement. However, it does not seem fair to assume that Liu’s words were simply wishful thinking. There

⁴⁵⁶ GPA 8-2-546-1 “San qu zhuan yuan shi cha bao gao 1939 san qu zhuan yuan Liu Shifan” (The Inspection Report of the Censor of the Third Circuit, Liu Shifan, 1939), 1-11.

was a subtle conceptual framework that guided in reading individual facts and in judging their meanings. He apparently focused on human dimensions, such as people's words, postures, facial expression, and some obscured hints about people's behavior. For example, he "jumped" to the conclusion that ethnic minority people were by nature docile subjects of the state by simply glancing at the enduring existence of some illegal but customary taxation.⁴⁵⁷ Even though we do not know how Liu arrived at this conclusion, he undoubtedly saw these ephemeral moments as more reliable indications of the reality than the pieces of hard evidence generated by scientific methods. As he mentioned in the report, he coped with every event by considering the overall stability of the entire region. In this regard, there are no signs to indicate that Liu failed.

I will go on to further flesh out Liu Shifan's conceptual framework in the following passages. Here, it is suffice to see what comments Wu Dingchang made about Liu Shifan, who had much more information and who stands in a better position than us to judge the censor's performance and ability. He said: "If all censors in Guizhou act like Liu Shifan, inspecting their jurisdictions frequently, checking officials, mitigating people, and tempering justice with mercy, the personnel administration of the province can be on track immediately."⁴⁵⁸

Liu Shifan took charge of the First Administrative and Inspectional Circuit on January 16th 1943.⁴⁵⁹ He soon proposed a basic strategy of how to deal with the riot. East Guizhou was divided by the Qingshui River and Zhenyuan into northern and southern parts. In the northern parts, Liu suggested that military suppression should be fulfilled by mitigation (*yi fu wei jiao* 以撫爲剿), while in the south mitigation should be achieved by suppression (*yi jiao wei fu* 以剿爲

⁴⁵⁷ GPA 8-2-546-1 "San qu zhuan yuan shi cha bao gao 1939 san qu zhuan yuan Liu Shifan," 9.

⁴⁵⁸ GPA 8-2-546-1 "San qu zhuan yuan shi cha bao gao 1939 san qu zhuan yuan Liu Shifan," 12.

⁴⁵⁹ Liu Shifan, *Qiandong shi bian ji yao*, 39.

撫).⁴⁶⁰ This strategy was enacted according to Liu's profound understanding of the local history and reality. The first source of this strategy was the famous Qing general Zuo Zongtang (左宗棠 1812-1885). Zuo had commented on the differences between the Nian rebels (捻) and Northwest Muslim insurgents (回) when analyzing the overall situation in North China in the 1870s:

Nian's tactics exceeded those of the Muslims. Their members could increase easily. By letting them grow day by day and plunder around, the riot will spread from the core to the peripheries. And then there will be no place intact in the Central Plain. So I prefer to suppress Nian rapidly but crack down on the Muslims slowly.⁴⁶¹

From Zuo's thinking, Liu Shifan learnt a lesson about the social background of the insurgents, which had a decisive influence over their ability to expand, and, correspondingly, the suppression tactics the government needed. Nian rebels consisted of poor peasants from fortified villages, where strong social connections could drive people to join the rebel force *en mass*. Liu Shifan applied this lesson to the local reality. In the southern part of the Qingshui River, most insurgents were Miao people, led by their village or lineage leaders. Ethnic minorities in a community often turned to the insurgency collectively. As in the case of the Nian, the government had to suppress this kind of rapid social mobilization with quick and powerful military pressure so as to inhibit the growing insurgent army from influencing the leaders of other temporarily neutral villages. The ultimate goal of this military attack was not to kill ordinary people, but to neutralize the majority of the anxious ethnic minorities.

In the northern part, the situation was different. Most of the insurgent leaders there were Han or highly marginalized ethnic minority bandits. They did not have a social bond with the rest of people. Ordinary people might "take a ride," or be forced to follow these bandit armies when necessary, but they were not obliged to identify with the insurgents. Liu Shifan's tactic,

⁴⁶⁰ Liu Shifan, *Qiandong shi bian ji yao*, 76.

⁴⁶¹ Liu Shifan, *Qiandong shi bian ji yao*, 76.

therefore, was to stabilize ordinary people first and then uncover a few outlaws. Sending big armies hastily into hesitant communities, as Xu Shipu had done in this region, could drive people to arms of insurgents. Liu Shifan's shrewd differentiation between the natures of insurgency in different areas allowed the militarily-stretched government to focus its major forces on the southern Qingshui River area, which accelerated the resolution of the incident.⁴⁶²

It is noteworthy that Liu Shifan used ethical rather than ethnical narratives to depict the nature and motives of the insurgents. For example, when mentioning how he disintegrated the force of the major insurgent leader Zhu Boping (朱伯屏) in the northern part of the Qingshui River, Liu Shifan pointed out that the Zhu family had a tradition of filial piety and brotherhood, and thus the fact that Zhu Boping and his brothers participated in the riot should be understood as docile behavior, because they were following the father's superstitious belief in the Collective Good Society.⁴⁶³ Liu Shifan's analysis can be seen as a calculated piece of political discourse that suspended the application of modern state law and left room for insurgents to negotiate and cooperate with the government. One can imagine that if he defined riot leaders as political collaborators who mobilized ethnic minorities and killed officials and were in contact with the foreign power in hopes of establishing their own dynasty (the Zhu family did claim themselves descendants of the Ming royal family), finding a nonviolent solution would be much more unlikely, since this kind of political language tended to involve interests of an imagined homogenous nation and the dignity of sovereignty, the taboo of the modern state. On the contrary, the ethical narratives could prevent the prosecution from ramping up their charges into something more serious, like treason. Setting the tone of the event, Liu Shifan further differentiated between the behavior and motives of the other Zhu family members, finding that

⁴⁶² Liu Shifan, *Qiandong shi bian ji yao*, 76.

⁴⁶³ Liu Shifan, *Qiandong shi bian ji yao*, 34, 39.

Zhu Boping's younger brother Zhu Zhongping (朱仲屏) was in fact a forced follower, who disagreed with the riot. Mobilizing Zhu brothers' father to persuade his second son, a few days after he took the office Liu Shifan had successfully arranged the surrender of Zhu Zhongping, who swore before the picture of Sun Yat-sen to follow Liu's orders. Liu let Zhu Zhongping lead his family force in assisting the regular army to fight back against his older brother. Under the joint attack of the government and the family, Zhu Boping's forces soon collapsed.⁴⁶⁴

In addition to the legal considerations, Liu Shifan's ethical narratives should also be understood as a better conceptual framework when it came to comprehending the reality. Liu Shifan apparently avoided using ethnic terminology when he was dealing with insurgents on the northern side of Qingshui River, even though there were certainly plenty ethnic minority residents. Ethnic terminology could easily lead to the conclusion that there should be some fundamental readjustment of ethnic relationships and corresponding socioeconomic arrangements. At this ethnic frontier, such a fundamental solution, for one thing, was too expensive for the government, which had no resources to fulfill the ideal status of ethnic equality. It could only try and further the unnecessary assimilation policies and blind acts of economic development, as had been done by Xu Shipu previously. For another, the more fundamentalized a solution, the higher the possibility that it oversimplifies the causes of the riot. In a larger sense, one can say that ethnicity is a label imposed by modern states to ignore more subtle interaction among people and governments. The corollary of a fundamental solution inevitably means an approach informed by technical and institutionalized processing, which attempts to fix the reality according to a general mode. It was this approach that formed the riot's deepest origin point. The critical difference between Liu Shifan and public administrators like Xu Shipu was that the

⁴⁶⁴ Liu Shifan, *Qiandong shi bian ji yao*, 40.

former did not need to try and seek out fundamental solutions in administration. His comprehension of humanity in action defied eternal schemas of rule, but made him more sensitive than others to transitory changes and to tiny cracks in reality. Moreover, Liu Shifan's narratives encapsulated a truth that even ethnic minorities were not necessarily more susceptible to an ethnic discourse than an ethic framework. For example, a group of insurgents called themselves the Yang Family Generals (*Yang jia jiang* 楊家將). The term has two connotations. First, it meant that the insurgent force was formed of people who might not belong to the same family, but who had the same family name - Yang. However, more importantly, the image of the Yang Family Generals in Han Chinese folk tradition bore the symbols of loyalty, patriotism, bravery and tragic heroism.⁴⁶⁵ Liu Shifan noticed and recorded this seemingly unimportant nickname of the rebels precisely because he could sense that the state, if it was willing to do, still shared a common language and ideological base with these marginalized people.⁴⁶⁶ By claiming that they were heroic figures in a Han Chinese folktale, these insurgents still in fact identified themselves as Chinese, regardless of their Miao, Tong and other ethnic roots. One can also see from Liu Shifan's measures that he did not follow mechanical methods of rule after dividing East Guizhou into ethnic minority south and Han bandit north. He insisted on a case-by-case approach, which was not a very "objective" understanding of the overall situation, but it was insightful.

⁴⁶⁵ The Yang Family Generals is a story first developed in the Song dynasty. It is about how male and female generals in the Yang family fought and sacrificed for the Song dynasty without regret even though they were unfairly treated and set up by evil ministers in the court. It has become a popular folktale among Chinese people ever since then. We can infer from this story that if those ethnic minority insurgents did have a so-called identity, that would be more compatible with the traditional Han Chinese culture rather than modern nationhood. Of course, as I have indicated and applied in the current research, ethnic factors do exist in our world and can be helpful conceptual tools to understand some problems. My point is that it is not the only inevitable framework for us to understand all societies. From the case of the Young Family Generals, one can argue that sometimes, ethnicity can be misleading when used to analyze even an ethnic frontier like Guizhou. John Herman's *Amid Clouds and Mist*, in many ways, has this problem.

⁴⁶⁶ Liu Shifan, *Qindong shi bian ji yao*, 32.

Even when dealing with major Miao local strongmen in the southern part of the Qingshui River area, Liu Shifan did not rely on ethnic frameworks and military suppression exclusively. More often than not, he skillfully blurred the line between ethnic and ethical causes so as to prevent the escalation of violence. The major insurgent leader in the southern Qingshui River area was a Miao chief, Tai Shengjiang, whose family had controlled the trade and transportation in the middle reaches of Qingshui River for generations. As such, Tai Shengjiang's forces formed the absolute majority of insurgents in the area and became Liu's top target. Be that as it may, once Tai Shengjiang's power had been decisively weakened down to a small armed group hiding out the deep forest, Liu Shifan began to "let good people induce bad guys to surrender."⁴⁶⁷ After rounds of letter exchange, Tai Shengjiang, who was also an experienced local political leader, quickly came to understand Liu's hints and came to Liu's office in person to ask for mercy. A meaningless fight in the jungle, which would only have increased casualties, was thus shunned. In the form of Tai Shengjiang's confession, Liu Shifan skillfully reshaped the image of Tai Shengjiang from a ringleader who deserved to be eliminated into a potentially responsible local aristocrat. This had been a meaningful political identity in Qing frontier statecraft, but had since lost its luster and legitimacy under the Westernized Republican politics.⁴⁶⁸ Liu Shifan always used derogatory words to describe Tai when he expressed his official position. At the same time, he intentionally put some passages of Tai's confession, which were rewritten (probably by Liu) in elegant classic language that highlighted Tai's intentions to be a defender of local social order.⁴⁶⁹ In so doing, Liu Shifan actually gave Tai's confession a favorable review and showed his sympathy, though implicitly, with Tai Shengjiang, whose innocent son had been

⁴⁶⁷ Liu Shifan, *Qiandong shi bian ji yao*, 76.

⁴⁶⁸ Liu Shifan, *Qiandong shi bian ji yao*, 54.

⁴⁶⁹ One can not exclude the possibility that Tai himself had adequate classic Chinese education to write his own confession, considering Tai Shengjiang's family was former *tusi*, the entitled aboriginal command.

killed by the brutal army commander, Liu Bolong (劉伯龍). In a subtle sense, his insurgency was re-explained by Liu as the improper, but understandable, revenge of a grieving father. Tai's ethnic minority background became secondary in this story. All in all, with the death of Zhu Boping and the surrender of Tai Shengjiang, the East Guizhou Incident eventually came to the end in March 1943, almost six months after its breakout.

In a letter sent to Wu Dingchang, one can see how Liu Shifan understood the crux of the riot and the most effective way to prevent it from happening again in the future. Even though he had fought with many ethnic minority leaders, Liu Shifan did not see Miao or other ethnic groups as the main threat. Quite on the contrary, Liu Shifan deemed enlisting many ethnic minority elites to staff sub-county administrative units to be an indispensable step toward stable governance in East Guizhou. He mentioned his own experience of training up many ethnic minority cadres in the Third Administrative and Inspectional Circuit. If he could make friends with the ethnic cadres in West Guizhou, who in turn were willing to share local information with him, Liu Shifan could not see why this approach should not be promoted in East Guizhou. Here, Liu Shifan seemed to be advocating an outdated perspective of Qing frontier statecraft. In his opinion, despite the fact that dealing with the rebellious Miao people was the most difficult, it was evil Han local bullies who, despite being relatively easy to governed, were the real source of the problems.⁴⁷⁰ As such, Liu Shifan did not see the improving police deployment to be the correct direction for the administration.⁴⁷¹ He argued that maintaining social order would be meaningless if local politics were not reinvigorated. Interestingly, he used the term “political techniques (*zheng zhi ji shu* 政治技術)” to refer to the method of intimately comprehending

⁴⁷⁰ Liu Shifan, *Qiandong shi bian ji yao*, 74-75.

⁴⁷¹ He did manage to reorganize and reequip police forces in those counties that had been torn by the riot. He also asked Wu Dingchang to finance his telephone network. The most important “concrete” suggestion of Liu Shifan was the establishment of a new county as well as an new administrative and inspectional circuit around Mountain Leigong (*Legong shan* 雷公山) a heavily wooded Miao zone.

local people and human reality. Unlike scientific ones, these political/human techniques were highly contextual and personal. They could be sensed in practice, but could not be learnt through simply reading or by repeating a set of steps. Liu Shifan noticed that officials in East Guizhou were generally ignorant of political techniques. As a result, they gave orders and urged subordinates from above, but rarely participated in the process of doing things. Because of the unspeakable nature of political techniques, Liu Shifan could only further explain what they were in an open letter to all county magistrates in his jurisdiction. He did so by quoting Zuo Zhongtang's words:

The ancient sage had said: "the priority of rule is having capable people. Benefits can only be raised after ingrained problems have been moved. Otherwise, the dissatisfaction within will be utilized by the evil without. [In this situation,] even though one can process one thousand official documents and give ten thousand word orders day and night, ... turmoil, small or big, remains inevitable"

As a matter of fact, Liu personally wrote a series of similar long moralistic letters, tirelessly reminding his subordinates to give more attention to correcting people's ethos (*zheng ren xin* 正人心) and cleaning the political air (*duan zheng feng* 端政風).⁴⁷² Realistic and programmatic as Liu Shifan was, he put a huge emphasis on these indescribable political techniques. Although this phenomenon is hard to be analyze through the lens of administrative science, it was apparently far more than a useless political sermon for Liu Shifan, who was able to handle a problem that had proved unsolvable for other public administrators. Certainly, it is tempting for present day readers to assume that Liu Shifan's words generated some mechanism of motivation that would still be scientifically examinable. This modern assumption may be right, or at least helpful. However, it seems equally beneficial and necessary for us to consider if those words actually worked in an unscientific way. Is it not possible that Liu Shifan was arguing that some

⁴⁷² Liu Shifan, *Qiandong shi bian ji yao*, 92.

critical human information should be sensed in person, rather than gathered through “rationalized” channels? Is there not an alternative administrative approach based on a political philosophy which does not assume the pursuit of self-interest is always dominant in human interaction? With these questions in mind, let us go back to read what Liu shared with Central Politics School students in *Service* before the East Guizhou Incident:

Administrative techniques require some wisdom and talent. Responding to events in daily life has no fixed categories. The subtlety of application exists in one’s mind only.⁴⁷³

Then, he went on to discuss how to inspect one’s jurisdiction with instructive comments quoted from Chen Hongmou (陳宏謀), another capable Qing governor (1696-1771AD). The reason to apply administrative techniques is to observe and catch human messages, which cannot be recorded in official documents.⁴⁷⁴

At later points in the article, Liu Shifan seemed to use political techniques and administrative techniques interchangeably. No matter whether it was in West or East Guizhou, Liu Shifan had always promoted an “administrative conceptual framework” that had little to do with modern social science (though he thought it necessary for a good official to have some social science knowledge). His focus was constantly on a close understanding of human ethos. Time and again, Liu Shifan attributed his successes to this non-scientific approach, and asked subordinates to also have take a tacit approach (*Mo yun qian yi* 默運潛移).⁴⁷⁵ As such, it seems improper to understand Liu Shifan as simply highlighting some “oriental” wisdom to supplement his material and scientific agenda. In many ways, what Liu Shifan talked about is very similar to the tacit knowledge, or knowledge in action, as proposed by scientific philosopher Michael

⁴⁷³ Liu Shifan, “Xing zheng du cha jing yan tan” (The Experience of Being a Censor of Administrative and Inspectional Circuit), *Fuwu* 2:5 (1940), 8.

⁴⁷⁴ Liu Shifan, “Xing zheng du cha jing yan tan,” 8.

⁴⁷⁵ Liu Shifan, *Qiandong shi bian ji yao*, 92.

Polanyi. Tacit knowledge is not some private subjective opinion that has no common ground with the external world. On the contrary, it is framed by a sense of responsibility and universal intent that is rooted in one's mind. However, this knowledge can only be comprehended through personal practice and non-logical thinking.⁴⁷⁶ In consequence, Liu's instructions in these letters sometimes seem logically contradictory. For example, he emphasized repeatedly the importance of integration between the officials and the people, supervisors and their subordinates, not simply because of some desire to appeal to ethnic minorities. Gathering critical information was equally important, and this required the official to be fully involved in people's lives. In the meantime, as he quoted words from the most famous Qing general and official scholar, Zeng Guofan (曾國藩 1811-1872): "People are like fishes. They panic and run when seeing a net," Liu Shifan did not encourage full administrative coverage, even though it seems an inevitable part of big government. Liu Shifan did want his officials to know and do more, but enlarging the formal administrative and institutional net was not the way to approach the already sabotaged and impoverished region of East Guizhou. He expected his subordinates to exert a personalized, rather than institutionalized and rationalized, presence in their society.

The tacit nature of Liu Shifan's approach probably made it hard for most people, including the magistrates under his command, to understand his points. We do not have any evidence that speaks to the extent to which the magistrates under Liu's command adjusted their administration towards a better form of governance. Nonetheless, it is certain that East Guizhou's following developments proved that Liu Shifan was the right man to administer the region. Throughout the rest of war, including the most turbulent days during the *Ichigo* operation in 1944, when the

⁴⁷⁶ Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958).

Japanese army broke into southern Guizhou, no further riots or administrative predicaments plagued East Guizhou.

Conclusion

In a memorandum sent to the provincial government in 1945, Liu Shifan reported that opium growing in the First Administrative and Inspectional Circuit had basically been rooted out. Meanwhile, he also expressed his worries about the new national policy, which institutionalized the division of fiscal income between county and village. The truth, as Liu Shifan pointed out, was that villages had no resources or qualified personnel to build a modern financial system. Nor were such fiscal incomes, such as house or feast tax, really available in rural Guizhou.⁴⁷⁷ This policy was only one of many measures that attempted to rationalize the administrative and fiscal framework of local government all the way down to grassroots units. Pragmatic and capable though Liu Shifan was, he rarely complained about the feasibility of a policy. More often than not, he believed that with an active style of leadership that could motivate officials, all administrative tasks could be done properly. Therefore, Liu's message should not be seen as the inert reaction of a bureaucrat, but a serious concern that an experienced field official had with the unlimited rationalization of the whole administrative process. From Liu's previous performances, the impoverishment of local society and severe shortage of proper personnel were probably not the real "ghosts" that haunted this shrewd administrator. Before we discuss what really bothered Liu, let us imagine the following scenario. If East Guizhou was suddenly given 1000 Central Politics graduates and sufficient financial support to establish a totally rationalized grassroots financial administration, what would have happened? Certainly, there would be a series of local

⁴⁷⁷ GPA 8-7054 "Yi qu zhuan shu gong zuo bao gao" (The Working Report of the First Circuit Office 1945), 8.

fiscal offices established and staffed by employees who had both the knowledge and discipline to follow the tax and fiscal regulations of modern state. Compared to the original baojia leaders, these trained civil servants were much less likely to surcharge ignorant ethnic minorities. Governmental funds would be faithfully used on projects and other tasks prescribed by the law. In this imaginary scenario, the function and efficiency of baojia would also be improved, since baojia leaders would probably get more pay from this sound fiscal system. Better paid baojia leaders should become more capable, and more incorruptible. In consequence, ordinary people should be able to enjoy the fruition of grassroots administrative rationalization. The scenario sounds great.

The whole picture would not be so rosy if we consider some other things that would also be inevitable in this scenario. The village affairs and funds would be categorized into different fiscal items. The money that belonged to one category would not be allowed to be used in others. Accordingly, local administrators, including baojia leaders, would get used to seeing their work as individual fiscal items and procedures, rather than integral to the whole thing. Any measure that could not be assigned to a fiscal category would be denied from the very beginning. In no time, grass-root employees and baojia leaders would only care whether a task could be funded. How to solve problems and achieve something in the context of real life would become ever more unimaginable in an administrative world that followed the rational division of labor.

One may question whether even Liu Shifan could do his job without some professionalization in administration. Liu was certainly aware of this. However, he also knew that Guizhou would never actually become more rational if it was assaulted with a rapid and unlimited form of administrative rationalization. At least, such a structural social change could not happen over a short period of time.

Therefore, the failure of public administration in Guizhou had little to do with the particular backwardness of the province. Undeniably, better fiscal resources and more modern infrastructures in Jiangnan did make it easier to fulfill some aspects of public administration. Be that as it may, as indicated in the previous chapters, public administration as a whole did not work very well in these more modern circumstances, even though the core assumptions of public administration indeed involved a highly industrialized and urbanized society. The real problem was that such an assumption was never an objective reflection of the American or Jiangnan societies, but a distorted one that had its own unique political background. As a result, it could not be precisely prescribed to the modern situation in China, and still less to offer a sustainable and effective administrative approach. Moreover, public administration and techno-scientific understanding of reality prevented its practitioners from using resources available in non-modern environments. In other words, the crux of problem was never the amount of resources. Rather, it is what can be seen as resources in politics.

Unfortunately for Liu Shifan, his opinion was not representative of mainstream thought. At roughly the same time he was busy dealing with his chaotic reality in East Guizhou, the Association of Chinese Administrative Studies (*Zhongguo xing zheng xue hui* 中國行政學會) was established in July 1943 in the wartime capital of Chongqing. To highlight its absolute dedication to professionalism, only people who had been administrative professors in universities were allowed to join the organization. The second article of the association's objective was to promote the Three-in-One Administrative System (*xing zheng san lian zhi* 行政三聯制), a nationwide institution that attempted to standardize and rationalize the administrative process into planning, implementation, and evaluation.⁴⁷⁸ While Guo Peishi had long abandoned such

⁴⁷⁸ Zhang Jinjian, *Mingcheng qi shi zi shu*, 359. About the Three-in-One Administrative System, see Morris L. Bian,

scientific formulas, the Central Politics School professor Liu Baimin proudly claimed to have found a new formula to the nature of administrative efficiency in his new book that promoted the Three-in-One Administrative System.⁴⁷⁹ In fact, the efforts to scientize politics and administration had already culminated in March 1940, when Central Planning Board (*Zhongyang she ji ju* 中央設計局) was established with the intention of subjecting every national policy and institution to scientific analysis and methods. Against this tide of the full rationalization of administration, minor local officials like Liu Shifan and Guo Peishi had no choice but to adjust themselves to the world. Their tacit knowledge of administration was supposed to be forgotten, even though it had demonstrated its great effects and indispensability to real administration. Their achievements, just like outdated software in a new version of an operating system, were deemed to be no longer legible or workable, even though it formed an integral part of the Chinese political modernity. This is another problematic concept that defies its contemporary conceptual framework. Modern Chinese statecraft, a term that I coin to distinguish between the realm formed by administrative discourses and practices of Liu Shifan and a few other Central Politics School officials on the one hand, and techno-scientific framework of public administration and political economy on the other, can only become legible and meaningful when the mainstream “operating system” completes its final upgrade (or downgrade?).

One may still argue that a professional public administrator would not be so ignorant of human dimensions in his work. He would consider the costs and the available resources, and enact the most reasonable administrative measures in the local context. One may also argue that even the Confucian official Guo Peishi had utilized many public administrative principles and

‘Building State Structure: Guomindang Institutional Rationalization during the Sino-Japanese War, 1937–1945’, *Modern China* 31:1, (2005).

⁴⁷⁹ Liu Baimin, *Xing zheng xue lun gong* (*The Outline of Administration*) (Chongqing: Chinese Culture Service Society, 1947), 18-21.

scientific forms of knowledge. All these questions make sense. However, one just needs to consider the following fact: Guo Peishi and Liu Shifan developed their analyses and corresponding administrative measures based on non-scientific observation, rather than any “objective” data gathered by scientific methods. As I have mentioned earlier, Gou Peishi started his whole administration off with a political judgment, rather than some universally checkable social facts that had been generated from scientific principles. So did Liu Shifan. It was these political judgments that allowed Guo and Liu to maintain a degree of stability in their fragile administrations at quite a low cost. Without their political judgment, Guo Peishi and Liu Shifan would definitely have seen their realities very differently. They would not be able to convince themselves, their subordinates, and even the provincial authorities to risk their lives or resources on projects such as moralistic teaching or ethnic minority mitigation. Phrased alternatively, when one decides to apply scientific methods in order to attain reliable facts, data, or institutional guarantees, he or she has in fact also made a political judgment: a political judgment that assumes human society can be simplified into essentially identical individuals whose actions and responses can be anticipated through an analytical framework. Life as a whole is turned into numbers, mechanisms, and impersonal factors. Therefore, an official who chooses to understand a county through per capita income, average life expectancy, and rates of illiteracy has already made a political judgment, and this defines what measures and policies he or she will see as legitimate in the ensuing administration. Public administration was not as politically objective as its protagonists assumed. It was a politics that already excluded specific human aspects, or at the very least did not treat them seriously. It could not imagine that even the bosses, who had huge economic interests and killed officials for personal power, could respect the authority of a county magistrate who demonstrated nothing but rectitude. The bias of public administration, therefore,

severely limited its believers' administrative options by deeming so many social and human conditions to be irrelevant, or even hostile, to rationalized and effective administration in advance. Guo Peishi and Liu Shifan's stories give us a taste of the possibilities that existed when an official escaped from the conceptual framework of public administration, and readopted a non-scientific approach that actually involved interacting with reality. On occasion, the reversal from administrative science to non-modern statecraft could be a progression, rather than a regression.

There is no doubt that Guo and Liu's statecraft had very little universal application. No evidence indicates that their non-scientific approaches were adopted successfully in other counties, be it inside or outside Guizhou. It is also true that we mainly have to rely on self-description and limited archives to represent the successes of Guo Peishi and Liu Shifan. Such representations surely contain some self-serving elements that had been added by the two shrewd officials. In a word, according to the dictates of science, Guo Peishi and Liu Shifan's alleged "achievements" have little value in regards to forming repeatable and universal modes that could be promoted to other places by officials who could do nothing but follow regulations. All these questions are undeniable and valid. However, Guo Peishi and Liu Shifan may argue that what they did was never a science, but a craft. Could a sculptor turn his craft into mechanisms that could be made understandable to total laymen in a book? Could this sculptor repeat his own knowledge in every piece of work? Could anyone say that the craft of sculpture is not objective, and therefore worthless, because no one knows if it will always be useful? All answers of the aforementioned questions are negative. Why, then, do we ask that the craft of administration, or statecraft, should be examined scientifically in terms of its repeatability and provability?

It may be beneficial to ask a different question: is public administration really repeatable and provable? Is techno-scientific politics universal and applicable anywhere? The non-scientific nature of statecraft often makes us take for granted that outside a few enclaves of statecraft, the world has been formed and run according to the logic of a techno-scientific culture. We are so willing to assume that public administration remains the second best option in most parts of this imperfect world. However, as this chapter and the previous chapters have shown, the applicability and efficacy of techno-scientific politics is far from universal. More often than not, the places where statecraft was absent were also the places where public administration failed. The stories of Guo Peishi and Liu Shifan can perhaps remind us that there is nothing all that scary outside the seemingly safe and stable political world that is framed science. Without science and its way of knowing and acting, we are still human beings capable of living in a non-scientific state, and solving our own problems. Once we admit that there is always a human dimension to any political world, finding an alternative conceptual framework to understand politics and its history in modern China might become possible.

Conclusion

On April 18, 1942, Lieutenant Colonel James Doolittle and his sixteen B25s bombed Tokyo. This was a risky military action. All bombers were lost but only limited harm was done to Japan, and Doolittle and members of his crew ended up crash landing on the Chinese mainland at the edge of Mt. Tianmu. And yet, soon afterwards, the raid came to be seen by the public in Allied countries as a successful action, which showed what scientific planning, technical reason and organizational creativity could accomplish. Considering the logistical difficulties that American soldiers and engineers needed to overcome before they could launch two-engine medium bombers like B25s from the short flight deck of the Hornet—the aircraft carrier used for the strike, which was designed for the operation of much smaller one engine airplanes—it was indeed a remarkable feat. What few have recognized is that the timely rescue of Doolittle and his crew members by the Nationalist local authorities later on that same April day was also an extraordinary feat, one that may have been even more difficult, in terms of organizational and administrative achievement, than the famed 30 seconds over Tokyo raid.

Consider, for example, the case of one of Doolittle's B25s, which crash-landed in Linan county (臨安縣) on the southeast edge of Mt. Tianmu. This is an area that had been occupied by Japanese forces and Chinese collaborators for more than three years. Located on the outskirts of Hangzhou, the capital city of Zhejiang and as major headquarters of the Japanese Army, Linan was the bridgehead from which all major Japanese cleansing campaigns were activated to wipe out any Nationalist forces seen as threatening the Japanese occupation zone. A little more than a year before the Doolittle mission, in April 15, 1941, the Japanese had launched a short but fierce raid traversing and conquering almost all county seats in Mount Tianmu area. Even so, the

Nationalist control over Mt. Tianmu proved to be resilient. Once the Japanese retreated, all fallen county governments were soon recovered. This was why, although the American authorities failed to inform the Chinese in advance about their planned action, Doolittle and those accompanying him on the raid could still be found and sent to a safe area by the Nationalist organized militia overnight, without being captured by the enemy, some of whose forces were just miles away. Some American pilots were delivered mainly by human power over 40 kilometers through winding mountain routes that were meticulously narrowed to allow only one or two-wheeled freight carts to pass.⁴⁸⁰ Therefore, the reunion of Doolittle and his men on April 19 in Yuchian, the administrative center of the entire Mt. Tianmu area and Western Zhejiang, required not only the good luck, courage, and technical know how of Americans, but also a variety of efficient administrative practices and organizational skills on the part of their Chinese allies to get them across a region that was under a direct Japanese military threat. As Chapter Two of this dissertation has indicated, the consolidation and development of wartime administration in the Mt Tianmu area was, in some ways, a feat even more remarkable and innovative than putting large bombers on an aircraft carrier designed for other purposes.

In many ways, Doolittle's rescue by He Yangling and his Central Politics School subordinates can be seen a metaphor for the encounter and relationship between Western/American techno-scientific politics and Chinese statecraft. The bombing of Tokyo, with all its technical requirements and the application of the power of science, represented the typical tenet of techno-scientific modernity and its politics. The mission was divided into well-calculated technical details in advance so as to maximize the chance of success and minimize the risk. American administrators and technicians efficiently organized available technological and

⁴⁸⁰ L033-001-0553 "Xing zheng du cha zhuan yuan gong shu bao an si lin bu er shi ba nian xing zheng hui yi zong ji lu," 80. He Yangling, "Doolittle jiang luo Tianmu ji" (The Landing of Doolittle on Mt Tianmu), *Du shu tong xun* (*The Reading News*) 116 (1946), 6-8.

logistic resources, dividing what needed to be done into coordinated parts necessary for the operation of this highly demanding and complicated mission. The planning for the raid showed all the characteristics of techno-scientific politics, the efficient combination of scientific power and managerial techniques in administrative implementation of a plan. It was an “institutional breakthrough,” undergirding and deviating from Weberian approach that has been widely accepted as the orthodoxy of modern bureaucracy building.

The Doolittle Raid, however, might easily have gone down in history as a tragedy, an American version of a kamikaze attack that wasted human lives and resources in an expensive military gamble. What made it possible for it to be much more than that was the fact that the Central Politics School officials, whose administrative approach violated the spirit of rational public administration and made use of non-scientific resources, were able to save Doolittle and his colleagues. It is also ironic that the Doolittle Raid would have been less “irrational” and costly, had American officials not been biased by their modern superiority to distrust the ability of the Chinese government to keep the raid secret and provide assistance.⁴⁸¹ With reasonable cooperation and communication, it is possible that the majority of the sixteen B25 bombers would have made it to safety; an informed Chinese government could have worked to help them land intact on airfields in Zhejiang rather than crashing in various places. Unwarranted cultural stereotypes on the part of the American authorities gave an irrational cast to the “rationality” of the planning process; the decision was in effect that it was better to risk American pilots’ lives

⁴⁸¹ Ch’i Hsi-sheng’s recent book has a very convincing and thorough analysis of how policy making of American (military) authorities involving military actions in China and Burma was limited and misguided by their ignorance of and racist bias against the Nationalist Government during the World War Two. There was an ingrained underestimation of the effectiveness and reasonability of Chinese administrative/military practices which in many cases had been proven much more feasible than Western patterns. See Ch’i Hsi-sheng, *Jian ba nu zhang de meng you: Taipingyang zhan zheng qi jian de Zhong Mei jun shi he zuo guan xi, 1941-1945 (Allies with Daggers Drawn: Sino-American Military Cooperation during the Pacific War, 1941-1945)* (Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 2012).

being lost than to increase, by telling the Chinese of the plan, the odds that the precious U.S. aircraft carrier would be founded and destroyed by the Japanese.⁴⁸²

In other words, the Doolittle Raid, as the symbol of techno-scientific modernity, was based on irrational political and cultural considerations. Moreover, its ultimate “success” actually counted on factors beyond the influence of technical rationality and science. Without the painstaking administrative maintenance of Central Politics School officials in West Zhejiang where the rise of techno-scientific modernity was undergirded by Chinese statecraft tradition and a mixture of modern techniques with indigenous human practices, the Doolittle Raid would have been nothing more than a high-tech folly. From this perspective, the Doolittle Raid is a metaphor that vividly captures the fate of techno-scientific modernity and its public administration embodiment in China: there was a crash first and then a rescue by the Chinese.

Furthermore, the Doolittle Raid, just like the techno-scientific approach to politics more generally, did more harm than good to the Chinese. In order to welcome the unexpected arrival of U.S. aircrafts, a huge amount of human and fiscal resources had been invested in Zhejiang to build airfields which would never be used but incur a large-scale Japanese cleansing campaign that aimed at wiping out all these “American” bases. More than 200,000 Chinese soldiers and civilians were killed or wounded in the campaign. By the same token, the Nationalist government put its best trained officials and a lot of money to promote public administration only to find that the techno-scientific politics caused more problems and burden than solutions it promised. More often than not, the more the government tried to objectify the human and political reality, the less responsive the society was to the state. And then, the government was forced to further objectify its people so as to get more resources to support endless endeavor of

⁴⁸² Despite the American efforts to keep its location secret, the Hornet was discovered by Japanese scouts in the Pacific 1300 km away from Tokyo on April 18, 1942. The result was that all B25s were forced to launch their attack immediately from their maximum air range.

objectification and rationalization. The Nationalist government, thus, fell into a vicious circle in which the pursuit of techno-scientific modernity de facto deteriorated its legitimacy and ability.

Nonetheless, the strong discursive power of techno-scientific modernity has kept those non-modern, indigenous, and human aspects elusive to contemporary public and researchers. Just as the story of Doolittle Raid continues to be depicted in Hollywood movies, such as the 2001 film *Pearl Harbor*, as a heroic and romantic epic, the unfolding of techno-scientific politics is still considered by the majority of researchers to be the central story of modern Chinese political history. Conditioned themselves by the assumptions embedded in a techno-scientific culture, many scholars have felt compelled to look for evidence of administrative rationalization and professionalization in modern Chinese politics and history. The Nationalist regime, under this hegemonic conceptual framework ends up being described as a repressive dictatorship (the approach of, for example, Lloyd Eastman) or a promising but unlucky modernizer (William Kirby's view, for instance). Whatever narrative scenarios are adopted, the Chinese political world per se is always approached in terms of its ability or lack of ability to modernize, without enough attention to the kind of variables rooted in the specifics of the Chinese context that, as the Doolittle Raid illustrated, could sometimes come into play at crucial moments when the best laid modernist plans went wrong.

If this dissertation has been successful, it will have made the reader cognizant of the irrational aspects of techno-scientific politics and the relevance of this to the story of the political failure of Nationalist China. The sincere pursuit of such a form of politics, not any lukewarm implementation of it, led the regime to waste its limited resources and miss the chance of building other, perhaps much more solid forms of local governance. The history I have tried to present is one that sees governance as much more complicated and messy than the one expected

by many scholars. Tracing the continuity of Weberian rationalization of government through the twentieth century may mislead us, encouraging us to assume the inevitability and desirability of a specific version of modern Chinese politics.

If the political history of modern China is imagined as an opera, the modern Chinese state might start its political performance with a flamboyant overture of Weberian rationalization, such as the *xinzheng* (new policies) in the last ten years of the Qing and public administration during the Nationalist era. However, the major theme of the following play was a variation formed by Chinese elements. Those Chinese actors on the stage found very quickly that they had no material/symbolic resources to use to carry out the action intended in a play written by Western masters. They had to use words and gestures that made sense to themselves and to a Chinese audience. In this context, it seems clear to me that themes of techno-scientific politics, be they rationalization or scientific methods, were secondary rather than central to the story of modern Chinese politics.

This dissertation, therefore, has been dedicated to explicating the ways that techno-scientific politics was doomed to fail in China. The political approach envisioned by a Western derived modernity was not only expensive in terms of the fiscal support its highly specified bureaucracy required but also ineffective because of its unrealistic overlooking of human complexity. In China, at least, scientifically rationalized administration was more often as *effect* rather than a *cause* of good governance. Whether in economically well developed Jiangning or semi-primitive Houping, efforts to build a huge local state machine that was capable of dividing facts on the ground into standardized, measurable and repeatable administrative products tended to prove untenable, as we have seen.. This finding invites us to reframe the question that guides much current scholarship: Why the Nationalists in particular, and other modern Chinese regimes in

general, often failed to fulfill the expectations for good governance held by those held in the thrall of a techno-scientific view of modernity. Compared to the rise and fall of individual regimes or polities, the enduring failure of escaping from unrealistic worship of Western derived conceptual framework of politics and modernity appears to be a pivotal factor in the course of modern Chinese political history.

I am not the first to point to this failure, for some insightful intellectuals noted it at the time. One of these was Wu Dingchang, who wrote the following in an article regarding governmental finance published in 1925:

Revenue during Emperor Guangxu [1875-1908] and Xuantong [1909-1912] reigns exceeded that collected during the period from Emperor Qianlong [1736-1795] to Jiaqing [1796-1820], but it was still inadequate to meet annual expenditure. The revenue of the Republican era further outnumbered that collected during the Guangxu and Xuantong reigns, but was even more inadequate to meet state expenditures. [This phenomenon was] not only true in China; European countries' post-war [World War I] revenue was many times more than their prewar ones, but proved increasingly insufficient when it came to matching annual expenditure. The increase of revenue and deficits grew proportionally... The pain of people and decline of the state also intensified correspondingly with the [increasing] amount of revenue... As history has authenticated, without improving governance of ordinary people first but focusing on the increase of revenue only, it will be inevitable that the revenue grows with deficit, and the state and people suffer mutually....⁴⁸³

Wu's words should be seen primarily as a reflection on Chinese problems; his statements regarding European states are not so much accurate observations as an extension of his criticism based on the country he knew best. Still, what matters here is that Wu had a profound understanding of the dangers for China embedded in the blind pursuit of techno-scientific politics. To fulfill the goal of full rationalization, the scale of fiscal income and expenditure had grown exponentially so as to meet the need to establish new apparatuses. While the benefit of

⁴⁸³ Wu Dingchang, "Cai zheng bie jie" (An Alternative Explanation of Finance), *Guo wen zhou bao (The National News Weekly)* 2:29 (1925), 13.

techno-scientific politics remained dubious, the fiscal burden imposed on people was clear to Wu. A more resourceful state often meant the enhanced governmental ability to consume resources rather than to reduce people's actual pain.

For this reason, Wu reminded his readers that the fundamental difference of governance principle between the modern European counties and traditional Chinese state was: "they search for state strengthening but we focus on soothing people." He also noted that "Concentrating wealth to the state favors state strengthening, while leaving fortune to people ensures civilian happiness."⁴⁸⁴ Again, Wu's statement sets up an oversimplified and essentialized dichotomy between an aggressive West and a benevolent China. However, Wu's point is still noteworthy. An ambitious modernizing state-building agenda could cause more harm than good, mainstream opinion at his time notwithstanding. Wu argued that a mild form of old style rule with time-honored goal and effective implement was more feasible for China where a giant but poor populace had made the overall taxability quite huge but the affordability of individuals low to a rapid expansion of a sustainable modern state.⁴⁸⁵

Wu Dingchang's perspective was by no means purely anachronistic, even though it idealized some aspects of pre-modern forms of imperial rule. Rather, it was the outgrowth of reflexive thinking based on first hand observation of the limitations of a purely techno-scientific approach to politics.

In another article published in 1926, Wu offered up a surprisingly precise analysis of the future of techno-scientific politics, based on what he had seen in Europe in 1921. Wu found an ingrained contradiction in the politics of Western European countries. On the one hand, capitalism generated economic oligarchies that tended to sacrifice the interest of working class

⁴⁸⁴ Wu Dingchang, "Cai zheng bie jie," 13.

⁴⁸⁵ Wu Dingchang, "Cai zheng bie jie," 14.

by exerting its influence in democracy. On the other, the principle of democracy and exploitation of big capitalists led to increasing rebelliousness among the masses. To mitigate the anger of crowds, while still protecting the interests of big corporations, Western European states were forced to enact deficit budget built on the printing of more and more paper currency, so as to bribe the masses with welfare while not raising taxes on big businesses. Meanwhile, to maintain employment and spur economic growth, Western governments had to print still more money to build infrastructure so as to stimulate production and trade. The huge surplus of commodities caused by overproduction needed oversea markets, which could only be ensured by imperialist and colonialist oversee interventions. Colonialism and imperialism, in turn, generated unbearable fiscal burden of oversea military and administrative deployment, which further deteriorated fiscal situation of Western states. Wu Dingchang, therefore, concluded that within years, there would be a major and violent breakdown of the entire system. At last, Wu lamented:

When studying economics abroad, we appreciated those [theories] as treasure, taking it a pity for having no chance to promote them back home. Now, I deeply feel it a real good luck for the Chinese people that our students who studied [foreign] economics and finance were prevented by the Chinese situation from fulfilling their expertise.⁴⁸⁶

Considering the financial crashes that came in 1929 and more recently in 2008, Wu's reflection on techno-scientific modernity, tentative as they might have been then, cannot be derided as mere fantasies of the decline of the West. Not many scholars and intellectuals, including non-Western ones who fully embraced the authority of Western knowledge, had Wu's clairvoyance and courage. In a sense, Wu's audacious forecast represents one of the earliest attempts from "the Third World" to question the universality of Western hegemonic knowledge and to

⁴⁸⁶ Wu Dingchang, "Shi ba shi ji yi lai jing ji xue shuo zhi liu du" (The Enduring Poison of Economic Theories ever since the 18th Century), *Guo wen zhou bao* 3:9 (1926), 9-10.

indigenize analysis of political economics based on Chinese experience and conceptual framework.

As thought provoking and in some ways prescient as Wu's words now see, they had little impact on mainstream intellectual opinion in China, shaped as it was in his day by the New Culture Movement (1915-1922), which highlighted democracy and science as the only legitimate content for Chinese modernity. Roughly at the same time Wu was criticizing a techno-scientific modernity shaped by capitalism and held hostage by big business, Chinese who studied U.S. public administration, the very ramification of capitalism and political economy, were preparing to introduce the latest methods of techno-scientific governance into China, as part of their effort to change a backward country into a modern one.

These public administration students were by no means unaware of the problems of modern political economy. Nevertheless, they believed that the rational spirit of modernity and science was could eventually overcome short-term economic and political problems. As Jiang Kangli claimed in an article depicting Americans' lifestyle:

[N]owadays overproduction, financial panic, the unemployment of workers, and the shutdown of factories, all these phenomena have made the aforementioned methods [of sophisticated commercial promotion] useless. In the present, no matter how fancy the advertisement is, how innovative the organization of a store is, people just have no money to buy commodities... However, Americans never stop moving forward... Therefore, when we observe a county, we cannot just look at the surface. We will be disappointed if we only look at their methods. We must pay attention to the spirit of life of a nation.⁴⁸⁷

Jiang then described how Americans were forward-looking, energetic, and disciplined, citing a list of qualities valued by techno-scientific modernity. He contrasted these characteristics to the alleged conservative, inert, and disorganized Chinese spirit. In his opinion, the economic crisis

⁴⁸⁷ Jiang Kangli, "Tan an mei guo ren de sheng huo" (On the Life of Americans) *Jiao yu xue (Teaching and Learning)* 1(1) (1935), 263.

and the impoverishment of American workers were all superfluous things irrelevant to the power of modernity. What really mattered, he thought, were rationality and an approach rooted in techno-scientific culture. For people like Jiang Kangli, belief in these ideas was a kind of religion. As a consequence, a modernizing rational approach to public administration was applied by Jiang and many Chinese of his time to all kinds of specific political situations; they treated it as a civilizational practice that would lead to the fulfillment of the spirit of modernity. With this belief in mind, they did not question whether this was really a valid conceptual framework of comprehending human reality in China. All difficulties and problems generated in the process of promoting techno-scientific politics could be attributed to the backwardness of Chinese reality, which distorted the rational spirit of modernity and inhibited the efficiency of science.

This discursive structure explains why professors in Central Politics School could maintain their public administration teaching through the entire 1930s and 1940s, even as some of their students were developing very different and much more effective approaches to local governance rooted in their first hand experience with Chinese reality on the ground. There were several reasons undergirding their enduring faith in the approach they embraced, including the material strength and high standard of living of Western countries, the undeniable necessity of the Nationalist government to build a techno-scientific administrative state capable of handling global challenges, and their dependence on the Chinese traditional thinking paradigm that tended to prefer holistic and fundamental explanation to specific and phenomenal understanding. The appeal of the discursive structure of techno-scientific politics that objectified human/political reality into a behavioral realm decided by extrapolitical forces was also a critical factor explaining its appeal. Its lasting power in politics lies exactly in that it seemed to transcend all contexts.

Convincing and attractive as it seemed, techno-scientific politics never became the norm in Chinese local governance, still less the only conceptual framework of understanding politics and human world. Even during its heyday, when unprecedented human and fiscal resources were dedicated to Jiangning and Lanxi experimental counties, organizing an administration according to scientific principles of objectification was an impractical goal. As I have shown above, a Weberian rationalization and professionalization of county administration helped little even in facilitating the objectification of local government. The administrative efficiency fulfilled by highly institutionalized and scientized official document processing, for example, had only dubious efficacy on the actual quality of local governance. It is true that the speed of document processing might be significantly raised. But, what concrete effect other than the delivery of paper was achieved? In the realms of agricultural, hygienic and educational administration, the adoption of public administration did not make the government more capable of handling newly named and specified administrative tasks, even though it did create a paper trail that enabled the government to claim it was getting better and better at meeting targets. Administrators remained functionaries having only some general humanistic training, even though they were assigned to be specialists in specific administrative bodies. Take the educational inspector/instructor in Jiangning, for example. He represented the government, but had no way of helping improve teaching performance. He had studied some philosophy of education in college but had never spent a day being a teacher. Nonetheless, new administrative tasks and document processing must have been rendered with the establishment of educational inspector/instructor. The government could use all those checklists and evaluating reports to construct a reality that in turn legitimized the expansion of public administration.

From this perspective, the deviation from orthodox public administration techniques in Lanxi can be seen as an unexpected and spontaneous resistance to the pervasive intellectual/political atmosphere of pursuing techno-scientific politics. There was no guarantee that Hu Ciwei and Chen Kaisi were meant to appreciate the value of Qing fish scale registers and those imperial techniques of land taxation. Limited fiscal support certainly offered stronger motivation for Hu and Chen to consider a cheaper way to retrieve land tax data. But, without an unwavering determination to complete the task and certain trust of non modern statecraft as well as human nature, there were just too many reasons to discard those “unreliable” registers compiled decades ago and dismiss the potential assistance from *ceshu*. Considering that earlier in Jiangning a far more modern approach of rationalization had been adopted and proven workable at least for a while, Hu’s decision could hardly be seen as simply due to a concern with saving money. It was the first time that the Nationalist officials relied on indigenous resources to question if full objectification of administration and society was the only option. At some critical moment, a subtle indigenous understanding of Chinese human reality prevailed over the authority of universal technical reason. From then on, some more de-objectifying methods—such as measuring land by pacing in Xiao County and Guo Peishi’s three-barrel-in-one administrative theory—could be imagined and tried, while aerial mapping remained widely adopted as the most scientific way to gather “facts” indispensable for modern administration.

Here, we are compelled to ask if there was a strong causal relationship between the establishment of a more specified administration and an improvement in the state’s ability to get things done. Perhaps, for a large scale, highly urbanized and industrialized community, a politics adjusting to and reducing unexpected human interference with the preciseness and speed of mass production is inevitable and desirable. However, even within the range of so-called modern

societies, communities of this type are only islands floating in a sea of other kinds of settings less conducive to governance via techno-scientific approaches. We often imagine an unstoppable and unlimited radiation of objectifying power from cosmopolitan hubs to all adjacent areas. However, we rarely ask if the intensity of this imagined radiation reflects actually the power of peripheries that support the hub rather than the dynamic exclusively originated within the center. The prewar county experiments in Zhejiang and Jiangsu provide us a different angle from which to view and think about the relationship between the tenet of modernity and its resource base. In this sense, my research authenticates one more time that there are multiple approaches to modernity, and that which turn out to be most suitable in a given settings varies due to context and available resources and traditions.

Once other factors are taken into account, the limitation of techno-scientific politics is clear. More often than not, the desirability of techno-scientific politics comes from an efficiency that is supposed to be possible only when factors of human intervention are fully objectified and minimized. Human dimensions in the modern political imagination are perpetually marginalized, not so much because they are no more involved in the political process as because their presence threatens the authority of science over the entire world. Chinese protagonists of standardized approaches to public administration, just like their counterparts around the world, never denied the importance of human agency in administrative process. However, they only promoted a form of human agency that was predicable and controllable. As we have seen above in this dissertation's discussion of Guizhou, when Xu Shipu designed and promoted a household registration bulletin that operated by putting in and pulling out wooden name planks, he counted on the controllability and initiative of human agency more than anyone. The reliance of techno-scientific politics on a disciplined human agency is such that any "abnormal" human nature, for

better or worse, must be ignored or at least inhibited so as to put human “power” into the niche of the well functioning political machine. As a result, public administrators as the avant-garde of techno-scientific politics trusted that everyone would act as a rational agent who could be regulated and would be motivated by universally applicable mechanisms. This assumption means that techno-scientific politics can work in places where people are relatively homogenous in terms of socioeconomic, cultural, and ethnical background, but not in areas where there is great heterogeneity among residents. Thus, we can see public administrators deployed hundreds of well equipped policemen in Jiangning, a place right adjacent to the most secured capital of the Nationalist regime, but paid inadequate attention to social/ethnic tension in East Guizhou.

In contrast, officials familiar with non-modern statecraft strategies—such as Liu Nengchao, Guo Peishi and Liu Shifan—tended to be more cognizant of local variation and hence savvier in distributing their limited resources to the places that needed them most. Liu Nengchao did not bother to replace elder local gentry leaders with young cadres with military backgrounds in districts under direct enemy military threat, because he knew that personal charisma mattered more than objectifiable forms of modern knowledge in a time of emergency. Similarly, Guo Peishi did not assume that all skin family members were identical thugs formed in the same socioeconomic conditions. Therefore, he dared to transfer resources from hiring reliable soldiers outside Houping to building short-term primary schools. Simply put, their non-modern assumptions about the variability of human nature offered them a way to adjust to local conditions and treat human beings as more than highly intelligent animals driven by fixed needs and desires. In this regard, for them, politics was a humanistic interaction among officials and people who exchanged not only material interests but also thoughts, wishes, and commitments.

It goes without saying that the story of some capable statecraft officials could not overthrow the hegemony of techno-scientific modernity. When Guo Peishi quoted words from the Chinese classic *The Great Learning* as three principles of his administration (“Enlighten virtues, befriend and renew people, and stop when you have attained ultimate goodness (*ming de* 明德, *qing min* 親民, *zhi yu zhi shan* 止於至善”) and eight phases of forming administrative measures (“have things investigated, true knowing practiced, the will sincere, the mind correct, the self cultivated, the clan harmonized, the country well governed, and great peace fulfilled in land under heaven (*ge* 格, *zhi* 致, *cheng* 誠, *zheng* 正, *xiu* 修, *qi* 齊, *zhi* 治, *ping* 平”), he assumed that this traditional statecraft discourse and practice remained pivotal to his “substantive governance (*shi zheng* 實政)” and understandable to at least some of his readers.⁴⁸⁸ Guo did not think it necessary to prove the effectiveness of measures formed in a mental and cognitive process of moral cultivation, which was integral to Confucian statecraft. Guo probably did not know that almost three years earlier in 1938, a Central Politics School professor He Lin (賀麟) who specialized in Hegelian philosophy had used the same quotation from *The Great Learning* to criticize the flaw of Chinese statecraft thinking. He did so in an orientation lecture to new students that included the following statements:

There is an inference in *The Great Learning*: “When things are investigated, true knowing is practiced. When true knowing is practiced, the will becomes sincere. When the will is sincere, the mind is corrected. When the mind is corrected, the self is cultivated. When the self is cultivated, the clan is harmonized. When the clan is harmonized, the country is well governed. When the country is well governed, the great peace of land under heaven is fulfilled.” This is a method of ratiocination that infers from an effect an effect, from a utility a utility. This method, given it is practically effective, is only a study of effect... having no necessity... The knowledge required from this method is also no necessity and universality.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁸ Guo Peishi, “Houping shi zheng lu,” 14-15.

⁴⁸⁹ He Lin, “Du shu fang fa” (The Method of Studying), *Zhongguo Guomindang Zhong yang zheng zhi xue xiao wen*

He Lin, thus, concluded that only logical thinking could render truly reliable knowledge of purely “scientific” fields, in which he included not only physics but also psychology and political philosophy.⁴⁹⁰

What we are witnessing here is the huge gap between the humanistic political atmosphere in which Chinese statecraft was developed and the techno-scientific one defined in terms of formal logic. For Guo Peishi, what connected causes and effects in politics was the ethical intention of an official and his proper understanding of the nature and morality of the people being governed. Whether sincere inner investigation could lead to a peaceful world ordered according to formal logic was never the crux of good governance to him. Precisely because he did not care if there was a logical inconsistency between his anti-superstition stance and his hiring of water masters, Guo could mobilize human resources in ways that those enamored with modern public administration ideas could not. Be that as it may, Guo’s successful experience would be no rival of his teacher’s scientific discourse once the Chinese political and human world had been objectified under the discursive hegemony of techno-scientific modernity.

He Lin’s promotion of logical thinking, however useless and naïve in practical administrative and political process, definitely sounded more convincing for newly matriculated Central Politics School students. They were used to having an “open-minded” perspective (meaning being open to the most modern ideas) and respecting “objective” facts more than Confucian teachings. In these circumstances, Guo Peishi, Liu Shifan and other officials’ statecraft were not likely to be treated seriously as offering feasible alternatives to “modern” ways. Because Chinese statecraft experiments tended to be unrepeatable and unprovable, they were rarely embraced except by those unafraid of being seen as political and cultural

xian lei bian, 1927-1949 (The Collection of Documents of Chinese Nationalist Central Politics School, 1927-1949) (Nanjing: Jiangsu People’s Press, 2014), 346.

⁴⁹⁰ He Lin, “Du shu fang fa,” 347.

conservatives. Even though the conceptual framework and agenda proposed by techno-scientific political imagination, as this research has shown, had a feasibility and “universality” probably much more limited than those of Chinese statecraft in forming really “effective” and “good,” in terms of having things done at a cost affordable for the state and people, local governance; the majority of “modern” people could not see any alternative to techno-scientific approaches..

There was always the temptation for even officials whose practices were clearly deflected from orthodox public administration approaches to emphasize the techno-scientific aspects of politics. For one thing, officials had the tendency to legitimize their measures by asserting the scientific nature of them. In a time when the hegemony of science was unchallengeable within the educated strata, no way could be safer in politics than highlighting the scientific rationality of one’s administration. A scientific gesture could help an official avoid unnecessary questions and keep him from being criticized by his supervisors and the intelligentsia. There is also no denying that officials, as members of an increasingly scientifically minded society, were sincere promoters of techno-scientific politics, even though they were from time to time forced to compromise with the “backward” reality in and modes of life of their jurisdictions.

In the narratives written by Dong Zhongsheng, one can see both tendencies. Dong’s “hardline politics” on closer examination were shaped by subtle assessments of human behavior as opposed to just abstract science. For example, his mobilization of Changhua women counted on a deep understanding of the hidden but unruly wish of onetime child brides to escape from their boring lives and husbands. However, in his memoir and archives, Dong emphasized those rational aspects of his actions in a social science analytical framework in which educated females were said to have responded first to the enlightened goal of government, presenting illiterate housewives as largely passive receptors of a well calculated plan. Women’s (sexual) unruliness

and independence, which had been so pivotal to the success of Dong's administration, was depicted exclusively as the result of an objectified poverty caused by objective socioeconomic conditions and therefore could be counted, tamed and utilized by (male) technical rationality. The proactive cooperation of those uncultured Changhua women generated in a non-scientific ethic context had to be neglected because these emotional/ethic elements defied the collective objectifying power of techno-scientific politics. Their existence threatened the ideas of preciseness and objectivity that contemporary readers expected to find when governing strategies worked. In an article published in Taiwan after 1949, Dong Zhongsheng expressed appreciation for the highly bureaucratized nature of Taiwan's county governmental framework designed and left by the Japanese colonial rule. He even idealized the Japanese style county administration in which the magistrate was supposed to be the only one responsible for policy making.⁴⁹¹ Dong's perspective was not unique among Central Politics School graduates. Educated as public administrators, they were entirely familiar with the discourse and supposed advantages of an ideal typed modern politics and science. Not all graduates of the school were like Guo Peishi who had experienced the drastic intellectual change from a staunch disciple of high scientism to self learnt specialist in Chinese statecraft. In most cases, they found a place on the spectrum between their school professors and mavericks like Guo Peishi. They might compromise with the reality at some time in their careers but rarely questioned the overall conceptual framework of politics they were taught to value.

What's more, the universality claimed by techno-scientific politics offers the ideological resources and practical needs for the emergence of "technocratic officials" (*ji shu guan liao* 技術官僚). Politics, or more specifically politics in its administrative and scientific ramification,

⁴⁹¹ Dong Zhongsheng, "ru he zuo xian zhang" (How to be a County Magistrate), *Dong Zhongsheng xian sheng quanji er zhan shi xian zheng*, 5-6

became an international “profession.” Despite the overall decline of colonialism after World War II, the cultural and political hegemony of the West in many ways continued because of how widely accepted Western notions of “development,” “modernization,” and “democratization” had become, how widely the notion of the value of “objective” fact and modern “technologies,” which could be transplanted into all indigenous contexts by various “international experts,” was accepted. This opened the way for action by foreign and local experts who claimed understanding of all “developing countries” on the basis of universal principles.

In light of this, it is ironic what happened later in his career to Dong Zhongsheng, one of those who had dedicated themselves to establish indigenous knowledge of politics and administration in order to revise the absurdity of a global techno-scientific regimen, became an international expert in 1964 invited by the Vietnamese government under the U.S military and economic aid. Dong Zhongsheng read French archives and gave advice to the Vietnamese head of land administration every week.⁴⁹² I have found no evidence on which to judge the effectiveness of Dong’s work for the Vietnamese. But, considering the poor result of U.S, advisers overall, Dong’s suggestions are unlikely to have been any more useful, since they dealt with a county about which he had little understanding. Dong’s minor participation in the Vietnam War only confirms the tremendous influence of American techno-scientific culture.. At the same time that Dong Zhongsheng was being consulted by local officials, the famous American scholar and China specialist Lucian Pye was also working in Vietnam to gather and generate knowledge necessary for the establishment of techno-scientific politics in that country. Pye relied on data from interviews with Communists prisoners in Malaysia to support what he claims was his “objective” scientific conclusion that those former Communists were simply

⁴⁹² Dong Zhongsheng, “Zheng hai sheng ya wu shi nian” (The Fifty Year Career of Politics), *Dong Zhongsheng xian shen quan ji yi yong sheng si ji (The Full Collection of Dong Zhongsheng’s Works 1: Four Notes of Eternity)* (Taipei: printed by author, 1999), 237.

people who were confused by an increasingly modernized society and found in the communist revolution a way to pursue “stable elements in their otherwise highly unstable societies.” This kind of reasoning was one thing that led Pye and other international experts to back the Strategic Hamlet Program, which envisioned the establishment of fortified villages in selected places. These were to be run by fully rationalized administrations equipped with public broadcast system and modern police forces, which would turn their residents, who would be forced to leave their homes and move into these artificial communities, from sympathizers of the Vietcong cause to happy modern anti-Communist citizens who would celebrate their liberation from traditional social bonds.⁴⁹³ The fundamental assumption behind Pye’s reasoning remained an objectified view of human nature that could and should be emancipated from all non-scientific commitments. Once all unfavorable human interventions were removed, the administration in those strategic helmets, he thought, could be managed totally according to technical rationality without concerning the diverse needs of human beings. Such an assumption in counter-insurgency and nation building was to be proved naïve and unwarranted by the disastrous outcome of the Vietnam War.

It should be clarified that a techno-scientific understanding of politics does not necessarily prevent excellent scholars, like Pye, from noticing the important role of culture in politics. Throughout his life, in fact, Pye wrote extensively on the distinctive features of Chinese political culture and how this shaped pattern of modern Chinese politics. However, on closer examination, Pye’s analysis of political culture ends up being simply a further development of a decontextualized scientific method. Having very limited knowledge of Chinese classics, the complexity of ancient society, and the micro-operation of imperial institutions, Pye still felt

⁴⁹³ Michael E Lantham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and “Nation-building” in the Kennedy Era* (Chap Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 174-176.

confident enough, based on his experiences in China, to use so called psychological analysis based on some modern samples to trace the origin of paternalistic authority in Chinese politics. He thus concluded that the Chinese had a problem of developing the kind of individualistic personality that is indispensable for the development of democracy, and that this was due to their early experience with dictatorial fathers. This childhood experience (or trauma?), Pye argues, explains why most Chinese through all of their lives search for another dictatorial authority to obey, a trait that inhibited the spread of Western styled reason and a prizing of cultural pluralism and individualism of the sort necessary for modernization. Though seeming to focus on particularity, undergirding Pye's study are beliefs about "universal" trend in human nature, and the idea that techno-scientific culture is a valued end result, which will simply take more work to achieve in settings where some kinds of traditional political cultures, such as the Chinese one as he imagined it, have a strong hold. In the end, to use Pye's word, the politics shaped by Chinese political culture can be nothing but a "tragedy" because of its inability to fulfill and operate on those human cultural dimensions expected by techno-scientific modernity.⁴⁹⁴ For Pye, the failure of the Vietnam War did not shake his belief in the universality and legitimacy of a techno-scientific understanding of politics, and the notion that only a single sort of liberal political system could lead to modernization.

This sort of faith in techno-scientific politics remains an important force to this day. With the spread of American global hegemony, countries around the world, including some that have their own rich heritages of statecraft, have greatly adjusted themselves and their indigenous practices to pursue the public administration approach described here. They have done this

⁴⁹⁴ See Lucian W. Pye with Mary W. Pye, *Asian Power and Politics: the Cultural Dimensions of Authority* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 1985). Also see the book review written by Chinese Scholar Fang Chaohui, "She me shi Zhongguo wen hua zhong you xiao de quan wei?" (What is the Effective Authority in Chinese Culture?), *Kai fang shi dai (Open Times)* 3 (2013).

sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously, sometimes vehemently and sometimes reluctantly. The unfolding of public administration in Northwest Europe is of special interest, considering that Northwest Europe and its administrative tradition had been the source and target of emulation for early proponents of American public administration. The adoption of public administration in Northwest Europe, therefore, reflects more European concerns, which are largely originated from great techno-scientific culture shared by both sides of the Atlantic. In France, Netherlands, and Scandinavian states, the rise of public administration was mainly the result of the appearance of the welfare state. The growing welfare system needed an enlarged public service organized and operated according to measureable scientific methods.⁴⁹⁵ In Germany, American public administration was first introduced to dismantle Prussian bureaucracy, which was accused of serving Nazi.⁴⁹⁶ In Britain, public administration was used by Mrs. Thatcher to privatize public sectors. The situation of British “new public management” best presents the characteristics of techno-scientific politics. The public sectors were greatly revised so as to meet the objective and most efficient principle of market and science.⁴⁹⁷ In the process of rationalization, traditional political concerns in Northwest Europe were marginalized.⁴⁹⁸ The government was alleged to be more service oriented than administration-centered. Administration was said to be liberated from the self-protective concerns of bureaucrats. This

⁴⁹⁵ Walter J. M. Kickert, “Expansion and Diversification of Public Administration in the Postwar Welfare State: the Case of Netherlands,” Jacques Chevallier, “Public Administration in Statist France,” and Torben Beck Jørgensen, “From Continental Law to Anglo-Saxon Behaviorism: Scandinavian Public Administration,” all in *Public Administration Review* 56(1) (1996).

⁴⁹⁶ Wolfgang Seibel, “Administrative Science as Reform: German Public Administration,” *Public Administration Review* 56(1) (1996).

⁴⁹⁷ Christopher Pollitt, “Antistatist Reforms and New Administrative Directions: Public Administration in the United Kingdom,” *Public Administration Review* 56(1) (1996).

⁴⁹⁸ Torben Beck Jørgensen, “From Continental Law to Anglo-Saxon Behaviorism: Scandinavian Public Administration,” 99-100.

intensification of techno-scientific politics in Europe has taken place since the early 1980s and was further accelerated after the end of Cold War in 1989.

With the collapse of socialist techno-scientific regimes around the world where problems of objectifying human and political reality had already been eased or worsened by other non-scientific indigenous elements, the great triumph of techno-scientific politics in the West, then, was introduced and redoubled to the third World and former states in the Warsaw-bloc to “rescue” them indiscriminately from inefficient political and economic institutions which might have undermined or undergirded the viability of techno-scientific regime. Before the lesson of the fall of these former socialist regimes is properly learnt, rationalization, austerity, and marketization, and economic shock therapy, all measures aiming at wiping out irrational and useless local political and letting objective extrapolitical have returned to functioning in realms which were allegedly disrupted by politics. In a word, in the last thirty years, we have been witnessing an ever-rapid expansion of techno-scientific politics around the world. The idea that indigenous politics should be replaced by universal science like principles is almost embraced by all educated strata around the world.

Thirty years later, however, what is the consequence of the expansion of techno-scientific politics, especially its impact on the areas where techno-scientific culture was quite alien? Recently, in an article published in the *Economist* regarding the decline of Western democracy, the author laments: “During the darkest days of the euro crisis the euro-elite forced Italy and Greece to replace democratically elected leaders with technocrats... The EU has become a breeding ground for populist parties... which claim to defend ordinary people against an arrogant and incompetent elite.”⁴⁹⁹ Whether or not democracy is declining requires much more research,

⁴⁹⁹ “What’s Gone Wrong with Democracy,” *Economist* (March 5th 2014), <http://www.economist.com/news/essays/21596796-democracy-was-most-successful-political-idea-20th-century->

of course. It seems to me reasonable to suppose, though, that with the further objectification of politics so as to obey economic/market principles, the technocratic usurpation and takeover of domestic political may end up simply the corollary of techno-scientific politics.

The enforcement of techno-scientific politics in those developing countries where political/human concerns were dismissed for a more efficient regime turned out not so beneficial, if not more harmful. A researcher who studied the implementation of New Public Management in those crisis states in the third world points out in his paper submitted to the UN Research Institute for Social Development:

The comprehensive nature of reforms and the penchant for quick results usually fail to take account of existing institutional and management capacities. This may overstretch and overload the administrative and management capacities... Comprehensive short-term reforms may also have a shocking effect not only on the public administrative system but on political stability in countries where recently elected democratic governments are trying to consolidate and where the political environment may still be volatile.⁵⁰⁰

In the end, this researcher suggests the following:

There is a need to take context into account. The application of NPM [New Public Management] in crisis states needs to be contingent upon whether or not prevailing contexts or conditions are suitable... [I]t may be advisable to consider whether aspects of NPM will enhance or undermine political stability.⁵⁰¹

If we admit that the hegemony and expansion of techno-scientific politics has been a long term global phenomenon, the re-adoption of and reflection on public administration in Post-Mao China has a historical meaning far more profound than a farewell to revolution or return to despotic conservatism. It actually means a new round of encounter between Chinese statecraft and techno-scientific politics. On the one hand, we are witnessing a burgeoning interest among

why-has-it-run-trouble-and-what-can-be-do

⁵⁰⁰ George A. Larbi, "The New Public Management Approach and Crisis States," UNRISD (United Nations Research Institute for Social Development) Discussion Paper No 112, September 1999, 36.

⁵⁰¹ George A. Larbi, "The New Public Management Approach and Crisis States," 36.

Chinese scholars and officials in introducing the latest scholarship on public administration. Fashionable terms, such as “New Public Management,” are celebrated as offering insightful approaches to reforming the government. The passion of embracing public administration is further enhanced by disaffection with the rigidity of the party state. The debate over administrative efficiency is often mixed with the appeal of de-partifying and neutralizing the state. Many public intellectuals in China now embrace the assumptions and values of techno-scientific politics. Meanwhile, public administration strategies, of the sort that began to take hold early in the 20th century, are utilized by people who want to maintain the political status quo. For those with experience of the extreme statist discourses and practices of the Mao years, the concept of techno-scientific politics is actually not unfamiliar at all. Public administration seems just an updated ideology that can be used to justify an all powerful and rational state and the monopoly over this state of the party.

On the other hand, as one of a few exceptions in the world that has survived the ruthless expansion of techno-scientific politics over the last three decades, the rising Chinese state has a confidence stronger than ever with developing its own political paradigm. From this perspective, the victory of the CCP can be attributed to its relatively better ability to inhibit the strong impetus of techno-scientific politics that had wreaked havoc in the Nationalist regime. At least in the pre 1949 years, due to various subjective and objective reasons, such as a poorer fiscal base and the ideological despising of capitalist Western modernity, the Chinese Communist leaders, compared to their Nationalist counterparts, have been largely immune to the craze of scientizing the process of politics and administration. This political immunity somehow has survived the tremendous change brought by the Opening-up. Especially after 2008 financial crisis in the West, some reputed scholars further argue the superiority of Chinese political discourse and practice

over the West.⁵⁰² Against this background, the following words of contemporary Chinese administrative theorist Qiao Yaozhang (喬耀章) are worth noting.. He claim in a recent article that the increasing depoliticization trend in Chinese administrative studies has been influenced by the latest Western public administration scholarship:

There are two tendencies of de-“administerization” [*qu xing zheng hua* 去”行政”化] and de-“politicization” [*qu zheng zhi hua* 去”政治”化] objectively existent in the trend: First, in terms of concept and wording, there is a de-“administerization,” meaning the absence of the two words *xin zheng* [administration]... Second, in terms of concrete content, stressing *xin*... and letting *zheng* in essence fade out leading to less or no discussion of politics in administrative studies.⁵⁰³

Qiao apparently notices the growing influence of techno-scientific culture and its depoliticized politics in Chinese public administrative studies, which have been resurrected alive after decades of “suspended animation” during the Mao era and become even more energetic than it was during the Nationalist period. Qiao observes that one important sign here is the replacement of the term “administration” with the concept of “management,” which is basically the consequence of following the logic and paradigm of New Public Management.⁵⁰⁴ According to his observation, the development of techno-scientific politics and its reflection on public administration has led the West to push always for the depoliticization of administration. His judgment does not conflict with the fact of increasing politicization and polarization in the U.S. and other Western democracies in recent years.⁵⁰⁵ In this milieu, the legitimacy and protecting shield of public

⁵⁰² See Wang Shaoguang, *Guo jia zhi li (The Governance of State)* (Beijing: Remin University of China Press, 2014). Justin Yifu Lin, *The New Structural Economy: a Framework For Rethinking Development and Policy* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2012).

⁵⁰³ Qiao Yaozhang, “Wen zheng: xin xing zheng guan de luo ji qi dian” (On *Zheng*: the Logical Starting Point of New Perspective of Administration), *Xing zheng lun tan (The Forum of Administration)* 20:1 2013, 9.

⁵⁰⁴ Qiao’s argument can also be supported by other review articles on the recent scholarship of Chinese public administrative studies. See Zhao Jinglai, “‘Xin gong gong guan li’ ruo gan wen ti yan jiu zong shu” (The Comprehensive Review of Some Issues in ‘New Public Management’), *Guo jia xing zheng xue yuan xue bao (The Bulletin of the National Academy of Administration)* 5 (2001).

⁵⁰⁵ Qiao Yaozhang, “Wen zheng: xin xing zheng guan de luo ji qi dian,” 10.

administration can only come from the neutrality and authority of science despite the fact that such a political-free strategy is increasingly vulnerable and impractical in dealing with inevitable political struggles in what Francis Fukuyama names “vetocracy.”⁵⁰⁶

Based on this understanding of the logic of techno-scientific politics, Qiao insists that Chinese administrators should study and serve “real and concrete human beings,” “men of multiple needs” in a historical context lasting for generations rather than abstract “man of single need” living in the forever present.⁵⁰⁷ Though he does not explain why this kind of multi-dimensional men are the cure of techno-scientific politics, from his analysis and our understanding of the objectifying impetus of modernity, there is no doubt that Qiao has properly caught the indispensability of de-objectifying human nature for a really indigenized and feasible Chinese administration. For similar reasons, another administrative scholar Zhang Kangzhi (張康之) develops the concept of “administration by virtue” (*yi de xing zheng* 以德行政) in an attempt to overcome the value-free assumption/predicament of techno-scientific politics.⁵⁰⁸

Qiao and Zhang are only two of many scholars who have tried to find ways to resolve the problems inherent in the techno-scientific conceptual framework that has shaped so many writings on contemporary Chinese politics. There are good reasons to question the motives of Qiao, Zhang and others who are interested in legitimating Chinese Communist authoritarian rule. Their emphasis on “Chinese characteristics” is derived in part from a desire to push back against universal value discourses that prize the freedom of the individual. This said, I bring them up as a way to repeat a final time my basic argument in this thesis: the assumptions embedded in

⁵⁰⁶ Fukuyama, in his latest book, highlights the importance of governance in addition to democracy, although he still insists that history has been ended in the victory of democracy. Francis Fukuyama, *Political Order and Political Decay: from the Industrial Revolution to the Globalization of Democracy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014).

⁵⁰⁷ Qiao Yaozhang, “Wen zheng: xin xing zheng guan de luo ji qi dian,” 10.

⁵⁰⁸ Zhang Kangzhi, *Xun zhao gong gong xing zheng de lun li shi jiao* (*Searching for the Ethical Perspective of Public Administration*) (Beijing: Remin University of China Press, 2012).

techno-scientific views of human nature and rationality as working the same way in all settings are problematic, and this has been true, and sometimes recognized as true, in China, in the past and again now, We have seen how a pure public administration approach had limited efficacy in Jianing, Lanxi, West Zhejiang, and East Guizhou in the Nationalist era. The pursuit of objectification and rationalization rarely achieved its goal of building an efficient state. But for the supplement of various indigenous human/political resources acquired through non-scientific ways, the promotion of techno-scientific politics in China would have created even bigger problems. If there were “seeds of destruction” leading to the demise of Nationalist Regime, to borrow a famous phrase of Lloyd Eastman’s, the fetishizing of a techno-scientific approach to politics should be considered one of them. It was not an effective herbicide to cleanse the Chinese political soil of a bad weed, as writings by Lucian Pye and many Chinese Nationalist writers before him would like to believe it was. From this perspective, Qiao’s reflections on the topic, while open to criticism for serving as a partisan defense of Communist rule, still make important points.

China in the second decade of 21st century has a government that is, no matter what we think of it morally, more competent than in many previous periods, at least when it comes to gathering and making use of objective social facts. Today’s China has the largest number of college graduates in the world. For the first time, it is totally possible to staff the entire government, from the lowest village to the departments in the central government with personnel who have at least completed undergraduate degrees. The government has many of the pivotal elements that Central Politics School professors thought were necessary to create a rational bureaucratic structure. Sufficient fiscal and technological support also makes it more feasible than ever before to build an administration that is capable of coordinating complicated affairs in

a rapidly industrialized and urbanized society. It is even proper to say that a fully rationalized government faithfully following the logic of techno-scientific politics is the only choice for the Communist government to legitimize its current political monopoly. The *raison d'être* of the Chinese Communist Party, in recent decades, has been largely, if not exclusively, its promise to provide high efficient, professional, and impartial public service. Under these circumstances, “The perspective of scientific development” (*Ke xue fa zhan guan* 科學發展觀) and “rule of law or rule by law” (*Yi fa zhi guo* 依法治國) seem to be the final triumphant hymn of techno-scientific modernity in China, and mark a thorough break with earlier revolutionary eras with their irrational surges.

However, today's China is also badly in need of Chinese statecraft to address conflicts and problems that cannot be solved by scientific methods and objectified human nature assumptions. Religious cults with rebellious millenarian beliefs are springing up in setting where social bonds have frayed and safety nets have been broken by rapid economic growth. Officials find it increasingly difficult to deal with these because the Chinese state is no more a provider of mental and ethic guidance. Meanwhile, the proletarianization of ethnic minorities, especially the Uighurs of Xinjiang, in a Han dominated modern economy exposes how limited techno-scientific politics is for solving tensions in human realities that defy simple objectification.

Under these circumstances, a new conceptual framework is needed. This should perhaps be sought in part in the long ignored statecraft tradition, imperfect and problematic as it always was. Here, it is worth remembering a comment by John King Fairbank : “The fact was that the GMD walked on two legs, which unfortunately went in opposite directions, one modernizing and one reactionary.”⁵⁰⁹ This dichotomy between modernizing and reactionary is constantly taken by

⁵⁰⁹ John King Fairbank and Merle Goldman, *China: A New History* (Cambridge, Mass. : Belknap Press of Harvard

many scholars of modern Chinese politics as a useful way to evaluate the endeavor of not only the Nationalist but also the Communist China. For them, there seems a clear cut divide between modernity and its opposite. Some things, such as rationalization and specification of administration, seem undisputedly modern, while others, such as Chinese statecraft based on ethics rather than scientific understanding, are the antithesis of the modern. China in this metaphoric structure is meant to be an awkward creature having no clear sense of direction and ability to coordinate its steps. Even though this dissertation has shown how arbitrary this division can be in practice, people who expect a “responsible” China to emerge cannot help but think of China’s political structure as unpredictable and undesirable. Consequently, their “cure” is unexceptionally enhancing the modernizing leg in Fairbank’s analogy while tightening, if not amputating, the reactionary one. However, if we remember the successes of those few Central Politics School officials who were willing and able to combine new approaches with lessons drawn from local circumstances and elements of the statecraft tradition, things appear in a different light; they show that sometimes allegedly “reactionary” factors could be very useful in achieving “modern” goals.. It is worth considering whether a useful way forward for China as a polity might be to following in the footsteps of figures such as Dong Zhongsheng, Liu Nengchao, and Guo Peishi, seeing “modernizing” and “reactionary” strategies and ideas as having the potential to be complementary.

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- GPA *Guizhou shen dang an* (Guizhou Provincial Archives)
- ZPA *Zhejiang shen dang an* (Zhejiang Provincial Archives)

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